

EMERGING ADULT WOMEN'S EXPERIENCES OF
MUSIC AND NATURE AT A MUSIC FESTIVAL

A Thesis Submitted to the
College of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Education
In the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon

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ABSTRACT

This study explored how engagement with music and nature in a Canadian outdoor music festival setting benefits emerging adult females, a population reported to experience ever-growing demands, pressures, and expectations in their everyday lives. Recent empirical accounts highlight the psychologically restorative effects of engagement with music for music festival attendees. However, no studies have yet directly examined (a) the benefits of the natural wilderness setting of the outdoor music festival for attendees' wellbeing, and (b) the interconnection of nature and music to facilitate health and wellbeing as conceptualized within a bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework. A purposeful sample was recruited based on age (18-29 years old); past festival attendance (2 or more); and the belief that attending music festivals was beneficial to their health and wellbeing. Recruitment and data collection occurred on-site during a 2018 summer music festival. Four women participated, each one individually interviewed for a period of 45 to 75 minutes in a semi-structured manner. Interviews were taped, fully transcribed, and then analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis. Findings suggested that the wellbeing dimensions of (a) positive emotion, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, and (e) accomplishment are optimized when engaging with music and nature in a Canadian outdoor music festival setting, a particularly beneficial and life-enhancing experience for young women negotiating emergent adulthood. Implications for practice and further research are noted.

Keywords: music, nature, music festivals, female emerging adults, health and wellbeing

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Completion of this journey would not have been possible without the following individuals:

To my supervisor, Dr. Jennifer Nicol: Your gentle, sagacious approach to supervision is incomparable. Thank you for your sincere interest in this project, and for inspiring me to follow through with this unique research endeavour. I am very grateful for your insightful guidance and masterly mentorship. It is your kind encouragement that allowed my creative spirit to soar throughout this adventure, one I will surely never forget.

To Dr. Stephanie Martin: Thank you for being such a dedicated advisory committee member. It was an honour to receive your input regarding this qualitative project, particularly pertaining to the upholding of ethical mores and standards in psychology research and practice. I am so appreciative of your compassionate support throughout my graduate journey.

To Dr. Brenda Kalyn: I am grateful to have had you as external examiner for my thesis. Thank you for your diligent interest in my project, and for your offering of expert counsel. Your empathic, gentle presence during the defence was calming and heart-warming.

To Dr. Laureen McIntyre: I am appreciative of you and your kind-hearted demeanour for making the seemingly ever-so daunting defence experience a most pleasurable one. Thank you for leading the examination with such grace.

To Carrie Gates & the Ness Creek Music Festival Committee: Thank you for your support in my project, and for allowing me to conduct participant recruitment and data collection procedures on-site during the 2018 *Ness Creek Music Festival*. I am grateful for your committed efforts in preserving Mother Nature's wondrous elements, as well as in making the music festival experience a safe and fulfilling endeavour for its attendees.

To the young women who participated in this study: It was an absolute pleasure to meet each and every one of you, and to hear about your insightful experiences with music and nature. I drew such inspiration from your courage in sharing your voices and your hearts with me.

To my friends, colleagues, & extended family members: How grateful am I that I was able to embark upon this journey knowing you were all by my side, cheering me on and encouraging me every step of the way. Thank you all for your immeasurable love and support.

To Angela Storry: To you, my spirit soul sister, thank you for bestowing me with peaceful vibes during *Ness Creek Music Festival*, and for your expert artistry in creating the *Nat's Nook* poster. I will forever cherish our friendship.

To Jeffrey Theriault: I am very thankful to have you alongside me on this life journey, always encouraging me and supporting me. I appreciate your patience, your kindness, and your compassion. Thank you for your constant presence and dedication, always at the ready to make me smile and laugh. My first-ever music festival partner, it is you who has further instilled in me my passion for music and nature, one I will forever continue to cultivate. I am everlastingly grateful to you.

To my brother, Lévi Soulodre: Thank you for sharing your musical, artistic heart with me each and every day with such vulnerability and such vibrancy. It is your benevolent gentleness and kindness that renders me to feel safe to take risks in reaching my highest potential. Without you paving the way, I would not have had the courage to follow my heart's desires, leading me to the young woman I am today. I am appreciative of you and your presence in my life, offering me with that exceptional big-brotherly guidance only you can provide. You will forever be my ultimate inspiration.

And last, but certainly not least... ♥

To my parents, Cheryl & Maurice Soulodre: How lucky I am to have been blessed with the most positively encouraging, supportive, and loving parents a girl could ever wish for. Thank you for instilling in me a love of learning from such a young age, and for passing down your passion for artistry. Exceptionally devoted, hard-working, and tender-hearted, you are the role models I strive to emulate every day. It is because of you I am here today, so very happy and fulfilled in pursuit of my dreams. *Maman et Papa, je vous aime gros!*

DEDICATION

*À vous, très chers Maman et Papa,
le battement de coeur de ma vie.*



To you, dearest Maman & Papa,
my life's beating heart.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

For as long as I can remember, music has been at the core of my existence. Some of my earliest memories with this art form include practicing my Bach piano *études* with Mom and listening to vinyls of Céline Dion and Whitney Houston with Dad. In addition, unbeknownst to our parents, I experienced many a moshing dance party with my brother Lévi to the sounds of Rage Against the Machine, roughly smashing into one another and rowdily jumping on any bed or couch surface we could find. Indeed, music truly did rock my world.

As an emerging dancer, singer, and musician, music personified an ever-present source with which I could connect and communicate, much like I would with a compassionate friend. Music has never let me down. It is always there when I need it most, whether it be to inspire me, to soothe me, to motivate me, or even to comfort me.

In a world of human suffering, I believe the universal language of music has the inimitable power to convert inner strife to peace. Music is a universally compelling therapeutic tool with powerful healing properties for those mindfully immersed within its sensorial expression of pitch, melody, rhythm, and harmony. As iconic Jamaican singer-songwriter Bob Marley once uttered, "One good thing about music, when it hits you, you feel no pain." It would seem that active engagement with music catalyzes the harmonious synchronicity of the mind, body, and spirit (e.g., Schäfer, Sedlmeier, Städtler, & Huron, 2013; Schäfer, Smukalla, & Oelker, 2014). Music has the ability to calm mental and emotional chaos (e.g., Kemper & Danhauer, 2005; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Thoma et al., 2013), to aid in the coping of physical and psychological symptoms of chronic pain and illness (e.g., Lipe, 2002; Mitchell, MacDonald, Knussen, & Serpell, 2007; Nicol, 2010), and even to deflect distress by enhancing psychological wellness (e.g., Croom, 2015; Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Lamont, 2011). Thus, the emergence of such therapeutic effects resulting from active engagement with music appears to optimize individual health and wellbeing.

Four summers ago, at the age of 24, my passion for music led me to attend my first Canadian outdoor music festival. I immediately became fascinated by the live sounds of musical brilliance reverberating in my soul as I danced barefoot in the mud, the astonishing view of the Pacific Ocean through the cloudy haze at the top of a forested mountain, the fragrant smell of pines that appeared to have been rooted for millions of years. What was this change I felt within me? My mind, body, and spirit felt tranquil, at peace, a feeling unlike I had ever sensed before.

Naturally, as a student social psychologist, this unique experience sparked my curiosity and interest. What was it about the music festival context that made me feel so well? Could other emerging adults such as myself also therapeutically benefit from the music festival experience?

In Canada, between 10% to 20% of youth are presently struggling with a mental illness or disorder, deemed "the single most disabling group of disorders worldwide" (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013). Moreover, it is estimated that 3.2 million youth in Canada are at risk for developing depression, with 12% of female youth and 5% of male youth already having experienced at least one major depressive episode in their lifetime (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013). For Canadian persons aged 16 to 30, an estimated one in 100 individuals will develop schizophrenia (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013). Furthermore, it has been reported that suicide is one of the leading causes of death for Canadian individuals in the 15 to 24 age range, with 4,000 persons dying prematurely by suicide annually (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2013). Emerging adulthood is a particularly vulnerable developmental period for one's health and wellbeing, marked by its five distinctive features: (a) identity exploration, (b) instability, (c) self-focus, (d) feeling in-between, and (e) sense of possibility (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2015). I therefore became fascinated with how individuals negotiating with these elements and other accumulative life stressors might utilize the music festival experience context as a means to maximize their health and wellbeing. Much like a young emerging adult shared at the *Woodstock Music & Art Fair*, "[I am here because I] just want to be myself and find a place where I can maintain some kind of balance within myself" (Maurice & Wadleigh, 1970).

As one of the main features of a Canadian outdoor music festival, music appears to be associated with optimization of emerging adult health and wellbeing (e.g., Ballantyne, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Experiences with music have been shown to therapeutically benefit emerging adults by (a) regulating their affect and gratifying their emotional needs via induction of positively-valenced feelings, thereby optimizing access to psychological resources and reducing stress; (b) prompting engagement in transcendence and reminiscence of positive memories; (c) acting as a source of support when feeling particularly troubled or lonely; (d) instigating robust bonds with like-minded music lovers, leading to social connections; (e) helping shape their identity; (f) honing their emotional intelligence; (g) increasing their multicultural competence; (h) inducing a state of relaxation and

inner peace; and (i) enabling meaningful self-reflection (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Hallam, 2010; Juslin, Liljeström, Västfjäll, Barradas, & Silva, 2008; Laiho, 2004; Lamont, 2011; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Pitts, 2005; Schäfer et al., 2013; Schäfer et al., 2014; van Goethem & Sloboda, 2011). Other identified music festival factors such as the festival atmosphere experience, the feeling of *communitas* developed in the social experience, as well as the separation experience characterized by escape from daily life constraints, have been associated with the maximization of psychological wellbeing in emerging adults (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

Empirical accounts of the beneficial effect of music on emerging adults' health and wellbeing in the music festival context have been documented (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Maeng, Jang, & Li, 2016; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). But what about nature? I cannot shake the feeling of my feet touching the ground *as I danced barefoot in the mud*, taking in *the astonishing view of the Pacific Ocean through the cloudy haze at the top of a forested mountain*, smelling *the fragrance of the pines that appeared to have been rooted for millions of years...* What of the therapeutic effect of nature on the health and wellbeing of emerging adults in the outdoor music festival setting?

Purpose and Relevance of the Present Study

To the best of my knowledge, there are no studies that have directly explored the benefits of nature and the wilderness setting of the outdoor music festival for emerging adult attendees' health and wellbeing. Some research, however, has alluded to therapeutic inclinations associated with a music festival's outdoor venue (e.g., Blešić, Pivac, Stamenković, Besermenji, & Marković, 2014; Croes & Lee, 2015; Laing & Mair, 2015; Mitchell, 1950; Pitts, 2005; Snell, 2005; Szmigin, Bengry-Howell, Morey, Griffin, & Riley, 2017; Tamulonis, 2017; Yoon, Lee, & Lee, 2010). For instance, Laing and Mair (2015) indicated some attendees drawing meaning from the picturesque setting in which the music festival was situated, prompting them to become more connected and harmoniously attuned to their natural surroundings. Other studies touch upon the benefit of boundedness achieved when having a music festival in a spatially-isolated remote outdoor setting (e.g., Szmigin et al., 2017; Snell, 2005), thereby facilitating a sense of *communitas*. *Communitas* is defined as an enhanced and intensified community atmosphere characterized by principles of shared collective experience, genuine affection, and social equality (Laing & Mair, 2015). As reported in Snell (2005), "When performers and participants alike are

all under the same sky, out in the same woods, a communal feeling is created, which helps lead to an open exchange of musical ideas among performers and audience members" (pp. 4-5). Moreover, the unconfined, unbounded feeling of being outside under a limitless sky at a music festival is also referenced as a means to feel free, having escaped the constricting confines of primarily living life indoors (Snell, 2005; Tamulonis, 2017). Reconnecting with the primitive way of human life, outdoor music festival attendees may sense an intimate, harmonious union with the natural environment surrounding them (Snell, 2005). One participant in Snell's (2005) study alluded to this phenomenon: "The music, the trees, and the hills, and the grass, and the air, they all go together synergistically, and they have a shared relationship for sure" (pp. 10-11). Part of the present study therefore sought to further examine the specific elements of nature that render the outdoor music festival experience a therapeutic phenomenon.

Numerous empirical studies suggest a paucity in the literature on the restorative effects of outdoor music festival attendance (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Maeng et al., 2016; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). This study not only explored the beneficial impact of nature in this regard, but also the element of music and other perceived therapeutic factors that have arisen in this phenomenological inquiry. The findings yielded from this study not only aimed to support prior empirically-derived discoveries about the outdoor music festival phenomenon, but also to further knowledge on the therapeutic effects of nature in this unique context. This study sought to spotlight evidence of some of the factors that have the potential to meaningfully benefit emerging adults' health and wellbeing and to add to their life quality. Implications of these results comprised informing (a) mental health professionals and educators on how they may apply such findings in their therapeutic role; (b) emerging adults on the influence of healing factors at an outdoor music festival for optimizing their health and wellbeing, some of which they may choose to intentionally employ in their everyday lives; and (c) outdoor music festival design and management teams on how best to optimize attendees' wellbeing at these events.

In order to uncover how emerging adults may counterbalance life stressors by reaching a harmonious and balanced state of mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing in the unique music festival setting, this study explored the experiences of female emerging adult attendees of a Canadian outdoor music festival. Specifically, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA, Smith, 1996; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009) was used (a) to investigate

how sensory engagement with the components of music and nature at this event are perceived as beneficial for their health and wellbeing, as well as (b) to explore personal meaning from attending such an event. This study's research question was: What is the lived experience and meaning of engagement with music and nature in the music festival setting for female emerging adult attendees?

Assumptions

In conducting this study, certain assumptions were made. I presumed that immersion in the Canadian outdoor music festival experience would yield restorative outcomes that would enhance the mental and emotional wellbeing of female emerging adult attendees. This assumption was based upon literature that supported examination of the music festival phenomenon from a therapeutic lens (e.g., Ballantyne et al, 2014; Harrison, 2014; Little, Burger, & Croucher, 2018; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Moreover, as a female emerging adult woman myself, this presumption was shaped through personal lived experience of the healing impact of interaction with music and nature in the Canadian outdoor music festival context. As attendance at a music festival is a voluntary endeavour, it was assumed that festival-goers expected to yield some type of therapeutic reward from the experience. Hence, I anticipated that the Canadian outdoor music festival experience would be a positive endeavour for participants. It is possible that the music festival experience may yield adverse psychological effects that compromise the health and wellbeing of its attendees (e.g., resulting outcomes of sexual assault victimization, violence, drug and/or alcohol overdose, exhaustion). However, for the scope of this study, I opted to solely focus on the positive outcomes of the music festival experience.

In order to optimally honour the voices of young adult female study participants in exploring how the elements of music and nature benefit them within the music festival milieu, the IPA qualitative approach was employed. IPA employment is considered particularly valuable for in-depth exploration of novel and complex phenomenological processes seldom explored in psychological academic literature. Moreover, it endorses the epistemological principles of (a) *phenomenology*, (b) *idiography*, and (c) *the double-hermeneutic paradigm*, the latter of which comprises the researcher empathically capturing and actively making sense of participant meaning-making regarding the phenomenon of interest. Using a semi-structured interview format for on-site investigation of the Canadian outdoor music festival experience, it was

assumed that the IPA methodology would maximally encapsulate how engagement with music and nature at this event benefits their health and wellbeing.

A final assumption inherent in this study was that its findings would provide valuable insight for certain groups of persons. In particular, it was thought that mental health professionals and educators could utilize this information to facilitate incorporation of musical and natural elements into their therapeutic practice to foster positive client change. Furthermore, it was presumed that this study's results would also inform outdoor music festival design and management teams on how best to optimize attendees' wellbeing at these events. It was also believed that the female emerging adult population could intentionally apply pertinent findings of music and nature immersion in their everyday lives. Thus, it was assumed that this study's findings would positively impact the health and wellbeing of individuals beyond the outdoor music festival setting.

Definition of Key Terms

To ensure maximal comprehension of this study, key terms and their corresponding definition are listed below in alphabetical order.

Canadian outdoor music festival: *Festival* etymologically derived from the Latin word *festum*, meaning public joy, merriment, and revelry (Filep, Volic, & Lee, 2015). The modern-day Canadian outdoor music festival is characterized by its distinct ephemeral and liminal features, its immersive activities, its location, and the proximity of performer and audience. It typically (a) lasts several days and nights with round-the-clock music performances; (b) offers stimulating educational music workshops (e.g., drumming circles, DJ equipment and performance tutorials); (c) takes place in picturesque, open-air settings surrounded by nature, usually distantly removed from festival attendees' urban abodes; and (d) enhances the connection between performer and festival attendee due to proximal stage access (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Maddox, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Snell, 2005). Participant recruitment and data collection for this study occurred at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, a Canadian outdoor music festival that fulfills all aforementioned criteria.

communitas: An enhanced and intensified community atmosphere characterized by principles of shared collective experience, genuine affection, and social equality (Laing & Mair, 2015). At a festival event, it refers to the spontaneous unification of unfamiliar persons, through which social

inequalities are removed and a sense of social belonging and connectedness is amplified (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Turner, 1969; Little et al., 2018).

emerging adult: Young person between 18 to 29 years of age.

emerging adult developmental stage: A particularly taxing developmental period on one's health and wellbeing, marked by its five distinctive features: (a) identity exploration, (b) instability, (c) self-focus, (d) feeling in-between, and (e) sense of possibility (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2015).

mindfulness: The practice of conscientiously and non-judgmentally tending to present-moment manifestations via sensorial engagement (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Keng, Smoski, & Robins, 2011; Khoury, Sharma, Rush, & Fournier, 2015).

nature connectedness or nature relatedness: The subjective sense of connectedness or relatedness one perceives to have with nature through nurturing of one's affective, cognitive, and experiential bond to its elements (Howell, Dopko, Passmore, & Buro, 2011; Nisbet, Zelenski, & Murphy, 2011).

restoration: Recuperation from depleted physiological, psychological, social, and/or spiritual reserves (Roe & Aspinall, 2011).

wellbeing: A state of optimal flourishing of one's physical, psychological, social, and/or spiritual health achieved via maximization of (a) positive emotion, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, and (e) accomplishment constructs (Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

Thesis Organization

This manuscript is organized and presented in the following manner. Chapter One begins with an introduction to the study, followed by a description of its purpose and relevance. This chapter then outlines my assumptions prior to commencing the study, and concludes with a list of key term definitions.

Chapter Two provides a review of literature related to the topic of study. The positive psychology theoretical framework is first described, followed by how it relates to the element of music and the music festival phenomenon. A description of this project's novel direction of study, that is, exploration of nature's impact on wellbeing in the music festival setting, is then provided.

An account of the IPA methodological approach and of the research procedures undertaken to complete this study is presented in Chapter Three.

Chapter Four presents this study's findings, taking the reader through *A Transformative Journey of the Female Emerging Adult Self in Attending an Outdoor Music Festival*. The results begin with a description of participant experiences that have perceivably compromised their health and wellbeing prior to attending a Canadian outdoor music festival. Then, meaningful experiences with music and nature that positively enhanced participant wellbeing at the music festival are provided. To conclude, anticipated outcomes for wellbeing following attendance as a result of engagement with music and nature in the music festival setting are described.

This thesis document concludes with Chapter Five, a section that commences with a summary of the results and how they integrate within existing literature. Next, the strengths and limitations of this study are highlighted, followed by directions for future research. Lastly, research implications for practice dedicated to mental health professionals and educators and music festival design and management teams are outlined.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The following chapter provides an overview of literature pertinent to the topic of health and wellbeing in an outdoor music festival setting. The positive psychology theoretical framework and its relation to strong musical experiences is first explored, followed by an overview of the historical underpinnings and present-day characteristics of the music festival phenomenon. Literature on the therapeutic effects associated with music festival attendance for the emerging adult demographic is then reviewed. Lastly, this chapter concludes with research on evidence-based ecotherapeutic effects.

Positive Psychology and the *PERMA* Framework

It would seem that the modern-day Western emerging adult is faced with ever-growing demands as a result of increasing technological, economic, social, and time pressures (Lamont, 2011). Chronic and intense exposure to such stressors may undermine health and wellbeing, potentially affecting one's ability to employ effective coping strategies to manage demands (Laiho, 2004). Emerging adulthood is a period characterized by instability, change, and self-exploration, making individuals in this developmental stage particularly vulnerable to psychological distress (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2015; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). On the other hand, positive psychology, as conceptualized by Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2000), offers ideas about how to promote health and wellbeing (Lamont, 2011; Lipe, 2002).

The premise of positive psychology is rooted in the maximization of psychological wellbeing at an individual, communal, and societal level (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). This is achieved via minimization of mental pathologies that surface as a result of stressors which render life a meaningless and purposeless endeavour (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Seligman (2011) proposed that the construct of positive psychology can be empirically measured via the following dimensions: (a) positive emotion, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, and (e) accomplishment, coined the *PERMA* framework (Harrison, 2014). Fulfilling these five elements is believed to bestow one with optimal psychological and emotional wellbeing (Croom, 2015; Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011).

Positive emotion. In order for the mind and spirit to flourish, one must experience moments of hedonia, also known as positive affect or pleasure. This concept is based upon Zillman's (1988) theory of mood management, which posits that individuals seek stimulus

conditions that generate prolonged hedonic states and reduce negative mood propensities (Laiho, 2004; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). According to the hedonic argument, pursuit of pleasure leads one to happiness (Lamont, 2011; Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011).

Engagement. Also known as eudaimonia or flow experience, engagement refers to one's yearning and achievement of psychological satiation and self-enhancement by being fully absorbed in the present moment of an activity (Croom, 2015; Hymer, 1984; Lamont, 2011; Nakamura & Csikszentmihalyi, 2009). The eudaimonic perspective suggests that this construct is positively correlated with one's life purpose (Harrison, 2014). Thus, engagement comprises a cognitively- and behaviourally-focused pursuit of ideal life outcomes, often characterized by a sense of authentic happiness and gratification (Laiho, 2004; Lamont, 2011).

Positive relationships. Eudaimonic narratives of psychological and social wellbeing often place emphasis on the development of positive relationships with others and with oneself (Croom, 2015; Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Laiho, 2004; Packer & Ballantyne, 2014). Maturation of one's social identity and one's individual identity are not mutually exclusive entities, but rather influence one another in an interrelated manner (Lippman & Greenwood, 2012).

Meaning. Central to the emerging adult experience is the search for a meaningful life (Arnett, 2000). In order to attain authentic happiness, it is thought that one must be driven and inspired to achieve something larger than oneself (Croom 2015; Lamont, 2011; Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011).

Accomplishment. Constituting the fifth and final element of Seligman's (2011) positive psychology theoretical framework of mental wellbeing, accomplishment refers to one's sense of mastery, of perceived competence, and of motivation to achieve (Croom, 2015).

Accomplishment is driven by one's self-determination, agency, and resilience, particularly in the face of unanticipated life challenges (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Croom, 2015; Laiho, 2004). When one feels accomplished, one perceives him/herself as self-efficacious and competent, qualities known to decrease depressive symptomology in young adults (Laiho, 2004).

Music and the Five Elements of Positive Psychology

There is evidence to suggest that experiences with music have served as a catalyst for enhancement of Seligman's (2011) *PERMA* dimensions (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Laiho, 2004; Lamont, 2011). As such, this section describes the role of music engagement as a moderating factor for the honing of these five elements in emerging adults.

Music and positive emotion. A study by Lamont (2011) on emerging adults' strong experiences of music listening revealed reports of thrills, shivers down the spine, piloerection, tears, and other physiological indicators identified in previous research that denote how "music can affect both the body and the brain within the hedonic route to happiness" (p. 241). Indeed, numerous studies suggest that emerging adults commonly engage in the activity of music listening as a means to regulate their affect, often to elicit and enhance a happy mood (e.g., Croom, 2015; Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Hallam, 2010; Juslin et al., 2008; Laiho, 2004; Lamont, 2011; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; van Goethem & Sloboda, 2011). Moreover, neurological brain imaging studies have noted that listening to music stimulates areas of the brain associated with euphoric emotion and arousal. These areas include the ventral striatum, midbrain, amygdala, orbitofrontal cortex, and ventral medial prefrontal cortex, the same areas of the brain that are stimulated when eating or engaging in sexual activity (Lamont, 2011). Positive "emotional contagion" from the expression of the music to the listener may transpire through functioning of the brain's mirror neurons (Croom, 2015, p. 47). Music listening seems to have the potential to biochemically and physiologically heighten an emerging adult's affect to a state of authentic bliss, particularly in the context of a live listening venue (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Lamont, 2011).

Music and engagement. Music listening is an activity in which emerging adults employ engagement strategies so as to generate and maintain a hedonic state of being (Lamont, 2011; Schäfer et al., 2014). This flow experience may be attained via recall of positive memories associated with the music, or by intently listening and analyzing the music's structure and expression (Lipe, 2002; Schäfer et al., 2014). Engagement in music listening yields many cognitive, emotional, and social benefits that transcend the human experience to one that is authentically pleasurable and blissful (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). The young adult participants in Lamont's (2011) study reported elevated levels of engagement while engaging in strong experiences of music, particularly in live concert settings.

Music and positive relationships. A study by Laiho (2004) revealed that music listening led adolescents to further hone their conceptions of self, as well as to enhance their interpersonal relationships through incitement of social connections that promote social bonding, unity, and belonging (Groarke & Hogan, 2015). Results from this study highlighted the inimitable relationship between music and the formation of interpersonal relationships for young adults;

namely, music has the ability to reconstruct identity with oneself and with others through its communicative quality, to reinforce group cohesion, to itself embody the role of a compassionate friend, and to evoke feelings of *communitas* in social concert settings (Laiho, 2004). Music has also proven to be a powerful mediator of emotional expression in therapeutic alliances for adolescent clients, with the potential to expeditiously prompt positive client change (Keen, 2005). It is to be noted that many of the findings on the therapeutic effects of music for adolescents may equally be attributable to the emerging adult population (Laiho, 2004; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

A study by Schäfer et al. (2014) sought to examine the potential long-term effects of music on the development of one's personal and social identities. The authors found that participation in intense musical experiences could indeed guide one to a lasting state of harmonious wellbeing in both personal and social realms (Schäfer et al., 2014). Findings suggested that participating in intense musical experiences motivated clients to maintain an achieved mental equilibrium in their everyday personal and social lives. They became more aware of their own needs, adopted more positive values, engaged in activities meaningful to them, became more open to establishing and intensifying social relationships, and recognized the spirituality in their lives (Schäfer et al., 2014).

Music and meaning. Meaning-making activates a sense of agency and autonomy, and helps shape personal and social identities (Lamont, 2011; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). According to Frith (1996), “Music, like identity, is both performance and story, describes the social in the individual and the individual in the social, the mind in the body and the body in the mind” (p. 109). For young adults, intense experiences of music listening may significantly aid them in their quest for personal meaning; they utilize music to solidify and bolster their identity interpretations, thereby ameliorating their sense of wellbeing (Laiho, 2004; Groarke & Hogan, 2015). Abraham Maslow (1962) delineated meaning from intense emotional experiences as a cathartic and motivating entity with the capacity to abate pathological psychological symptomology (Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Schäfer et al., 2014). It is therefore suggested that such heightened experiences prompted by music listening can be a healing force through which young adults can profess meaning (Laiho, 2004).

With the purpose of exploring the beneficial effects of music to optimize physical and mental healing of ill persons, Lipe (2002) conducted a meta-analysis of 52 articles. They

identified seven predominant themes in the literature: (a) meaning, hope, and purpose are made concrete in one's lived experience when one engages in musical experience, a catalyst for mobilizing healing; (b) engaging in musical activity leads one to untapped imaginative and fruitful ways of listening, thinking, and being, potentially bringing new meaning to life; (c) the human characteristic of openness flourishes while in a musical experience; (d) music has the ability to bridge the conscious from the unconscious, thus intentionally connecting one's reality with one's inner personal truth; (e) engaging in music symbiotically connects energy of present-moment awareness with mindful transpersonal reflection, a strategy thought to help eradicate pathology; (f) music has the ability to strengthen interpersonal relationships; and (g) the structured manner in which music is composed promotes comforting structure to one's life, leading one to envision more clearly personal meaning. Hence, the authors conclude that full absorption in an intense musical experience has transcendent qualities, which give voice to one's meaning in life, deemed a critical component to optimize psychological wellbeing (Groarke & Hogan, 2015).

Music and accomplishment. In Laiho's (2004) study, agency, considered an extension of accomplishment, was an outcome associated with the psychological meaning of music in the everyday life of adolescents. Whether singing in a choir, playing an instrument, dancing to a musical beat, or improvising the creation of sounds, engagement with music motivates young adults to strive for and attain personally idealized life outcomes (Croom, 2015). A sense of achievement resulting from participation in musical activities is associated with increased levels of perceived success, competence, self-esteem, pride, happiness, life satisfaction, and optimism for the future (Croom, 2015).

Summary. Croom (2015) asserts that "a paradigmatic or prototypical case of human psychological wellbeing would largely manifest most or all of the five factors of positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment" (p. 45). It would seem that the five positive psychology foci outlined above are deeply interconnected, one positively impacting the other. Seligman's (2011) *PERMA* dimensions have been employed in literature examining the therapeutic effects of young adults' intense experiences with music (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Laiho, 2004; Lamont, 2011). A positive psychology framework may therefore be useful as a means to understand experiences associated with emerging adults' subjective,

social, and psychological wellbeing in the music festival context (Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The Music Festival Phenomenon

Evidence on ancient festival experiences suggest that they originated from traditional harvest, wedding, and community festivities with musical entertainment, often lasting several days and involving the entire village population (Kiguli, 2013). As historic festivals evolved, its celebratory focus shifted to one of political and social revolt (Griffin, Bengry-Howell, Riley, Morey, & Szmigin, 2016; Mitchell, 1950; Szmigin et al., 2017). A number of European music festivals surfaced following World War II's end, presumably as a means to alleviate the trauma endured by the inhabitants of the continent during the conflict (Mitchell, 1950; Szmigin et al., 2017). Shortly thereafter, a counter-culture ideology arose in North America, characterized by rebellion of Western capitalist values of productivism and of the dominant established order that reinforced enlistment of its citizens in the Vietnam War (Sharpe, 2008). Regarded as the most iconic music festival of all time, the *Woodstock Music & Art Fair* sought to resist oppression from existing legislative authority, a rallying cry that rang loud and clear at this *Aquarian Exposition of Peace and Music* (Griffin et al., 2016; Maurice & Wadleigh, 1970). The music festival took place on a dairy farm in the Catskill Mountains of southern New York State from August 15, 1969 to early-morning August 18, 1969, ending with Jimi Hendrix's hauntingly immortal rendition of *The Star-Spangled Banner* that vividly imitated the disturbing sounds of war (Cush, 2016; Maurice & Wadleigh, 1970). *Woodstock* epitomized a quintessential music festival utopian discourse of *communitas*, freedom, peace, and goodwill, a way of being that continues to be emulated in today's music festivals (Griffin et al., 2016; Kiguli, 2013; Szmigin et al., 2017).

The modern-day music festival distinguishes itself from other live music performances by its duration, its immersive activities, its location, and the proximity of performer and audience (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Maddox, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Snell, 2005). Namely, a music festival typically (a) lasts several days and nights with round-the-clock music performances; (b) offers stimulating educational music workshops (e.g., drumming circles, DJ equipment and performance tutorials); (c) takes place in picturesque, open-air settings surrounded by nature usually distant from festival attendees' urban abodes; and (d) enhances the connection between performer and festival attendee due to

proximal stage access (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Maddox, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Snell, 2005). The distinct ephemeral and liminal features of the music festival phenomenon render the experience one in which attendees can engage in authentic learning and exploration free of daily-life constraints (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Cummings, 2007; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Sharpe, 2008; Snell, 2005). In particular, research suggests that the music festival experience may facilitate self-actualizing of emerging adult attendees' personal narratives within their individual, social, and musical identities (DeNora, 2000; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Snell, 2005). This assertion is echoed in the account of a music festival participant in Kiguli's (2013) study: "These songs nourish us in more ways than people may recognize. They tell us about our past and present. They also help us to think about our future. The songs here help us create something that expresses us." (p. 75).

Numerous sources have reported the steady growth in music festival popularity and attendance around the world, such as in Europe (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Karlsen, 2009), in the Caribbean (e.g., Croes & Lee, 2015), and in North America (e.g., Snell, 2005; Tamulonis, 2017; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). For instance, approximately 16 million persons attend Canada's 558 annual music festivals, and roughly 32 million fans attended music festivals in the United States in 2015 (Maddeaux, 2017; Tamulonis, 2017). Today's live music industry is valued at 28 billion dollars, and, according to mega promoter Live Nation, music festivals are thought to be the "the most important development of the first decade of the twenty-first century" (Wilks, 2011, p. 284). Moreover, Ballantyne et al. (2014) suggested that of all available ways to experience music in today's digital world, festivals are by far the most commonly accessed by emerging adults.

Much of the existing literature on music festivals focuses on identifying the motivations of those attending (e.g., Blešić et al., 2014; Croes & Lee, 2015; Li & Wood, 2016; Maeng et al., 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Saleh & Ryan, 1993; Sharpe, 2008; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013; Yoon et al., 2010; Ziakas, 2013). Viewed from a tourism motivation theoretical lens, the main purpose of this research is generating new effective strategies to improve management and to maximize profitability at these leisure events (Karlsen, 2009; Maeng et al., 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Szmigin et al., 2017). Pioneer studies in tourism and leisure management literature have identified the following as major motivating factors for participants to attend

festivals: (a) escape from a perceived mundane environment, (b) exploration and evaluation of self, (c) relaxation, (d) nostalgia, (e) enhancement of kinship relationships, (f) facilitation of social interaction, (g) event novelty, and (h) education (Crompton, 1979). Recently published studies in this research domain continue to validate these motivational themes (e.g., Croes & Lee, 2015; Li & Wood, 2016; Maeng et al., 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Novel motivational factors of festival attendance that have emerged from this literature include (a) event anticipation, (b) stimulus-seeking, (c) restoration of psychological equilibrium, (d) embodiment of positive social change, (e) entertainment, (f) gregariousness, (g) known-group socialization, (h) external socialization, (i) cultural exploration, (j) the unique festival atmosphere, (k) curiosity, and (l) appreciation of nature, the latter being of particular interest for the purpose of this study (Blešić et al., 2014; Maeng et al., 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010; Sharpe, 2008; Staggenborg, Eder, & Sudderth, 1994).

Therapeutic Effects of Music Festival Attendance for Emerging Adults

The majority of research on music festival attendance focuses on their economic impact and commercial implications (Karlsen, 2009; Maeng et al., 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010). Moreover, several sources cite a paucity of academic literature on the psychological benefits of the music festival experience (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Maeng et al., 2016; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Music festival attendees are typically between 18 to 30 years of age (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Li & Wood, 2016), and according to Lamont (2011), "Young adults are in a stable and balanced stage of musical development, [...] in a phase with the potential for more communication through music, attendance at live events, and a broadening of musical taste" (p. 234). Emerging adulthood is a developmental stage associated with developing coping strategies and learning to manage the stressors of adult life (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2015; Laiho, 2004; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). Evidence suggests that the act of music listening serves a therapeutic purpose for emerging adults as they experience growing demands and expectations (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Hallam, 2010; Juslin et al., 2008; Laiho, 2004; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Pitts, 2005; Schäfer et al., 2014).

Seligman's (2011) *PERMA* dimensions have been employed in literature to uncover the mental and emotional benefits of music festival attendance (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). The next section therefore explores the role of the

music festival setting as a moderating factor for the development of (a) positive emotion, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, and (e) accomplishment in emerging adults.

Music festivals and positive emotion. The music festival experience appears to be an ideal catalyst in inducing a positive emotional state for its attendees (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Griffin et al., 2016; Laing & Mair, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Yoon et al., 2010). Evoked by the infamous 1960s counter-culture Free Festival Movement, discourse of present-day music festivals typically involves notions of freedom, excitement, and hedonistic pleasure (Griffin et al., 2016). It seems that hedonism stemming from music listening is intensified and maximized at these events, thus extending their emotional field on the positive end of the spectrum of affect (Laiho, 2004; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Unique to the music festival context is the embodied liminal space removed from attendees' everyday lives in which they can "experience 'freedom' through a range of hedonistic practices that enable them to express their hidden - and more 'authentic' - selves" (Griffin et al., 2016, p. 3). Attending this event may not only instil a hedonic state of mind for the duration of the music festival, but may inspire its participants to adopt a positive outlook in their everyday lives (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Packer & Ballantyne's (2011) study, which sought to investigate the positive emotional impact of emerging adult music festival attendance on aspects of psychological health and wellbeing, revealed that the hedonist state of mind incited at this event led to heightened personal growth and meaning of participants who perceived life in a more optimistic fashion.

Music festivals and engagement. A music festival may incite flow experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002) long before the event actually commences. Prospective attendees may be deeply engaged in listening to albums of music groups they know will be performing, exhibit feelings of excitement in its anticipation, and perhaps eagerly converse with fellow attendees about its proceedings (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). At the music festival event itself, flow is not only induced via attending of the live performances, but also through the intimate bi-directional connection formed between performer and audience (Harrison, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). The more emerging adult attendees are cognitively attuned and emotionally engaged to the concert experience, the more flow is actively incited (Csikszentmihalyi, 2002; Lamont, 2011). It is this heightened state of engagement that is thought to enhance one's level of self-understanding, self-acceptance, and purpose in life (Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). According to Harrison (2014), "People experience senses of engagement and

connection at [music] festivals in ways that are not possible in even typical live music concerts" (Evidence section, para. 1; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). This may be attributed to the music festival context being one in which attendees cannot help but to fully immerse themselves, as it commonly occurs over the course of several days and participants typically camp on-site for its duration (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Snell, 2005). Thus, the music festival experience is an exceptional environment in which young adults can explore their sense of identity, meaning, and purpose, resulting in positive psychological benefits that optimize their emotional wellbeing (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008).

Music festivals and positive relationships. There is evidence to suggest that attending a music festival is considered to be an intense musical experience that may also yield long-term social benefits for its participants (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). According to Packer and Ballantyne (2011), some of the potential long-term psychosocial wellbeing outcomes for emerging adult attendees include development of the *social integration*, *social acceptance*, and *social actualization* constructs (Keyes, 1998). *Social integration* refers to a perception of commonality with others in one's constructed social reality (Keyes, 1998). By sharing a common experience with other like-minded individuals at a music festival, emerging adults may continue deepening these newly-formed relationships following the festival's end, which may safeguard against social seclusion (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Attending a music festival may also render emerging adult attendees to become more *socially accepting*, that is, to authentically feel more at ease in the presence of others, as well as to perceive human nature more favourably (Keyes, 1998). Finally, emerging adult festival-goers may exhibit *social actualization* long after the music festival experience, that is, a hopeful and optimistic perception of the present and future societal conditions (Keyes, 1998). Furthermore, it is suggested that relationships formed prior to the music festival event are strengthened and reinforced as a result of attending (Croom, 2015; Koelsch, 2013; Wilks, 2011). This outcome is coined *bonding social capital* in the sociologically-influenced tourism and leisure literature (Putnam, 2000; Wilks, 2011). It would seem that musical performances in the festival context consistently succeed in inciting, strengthening, and affirming emerging adult attendees' interpersonal relationships, thereby positively contributing to a harmonious balance of their psychological and social wellbeing

(Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Croes & Lee, 2015; Croom, 2015; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

Music festivals and meaning. Attending a music festival is an intense musical experience believed to contribute to festival-goers' self-narratives of meaning (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Music festivals offer a temporal space in which emerging adult attendees engage in the process of personal and collective meaning-making so as to better understand themselves (Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Kiguli, 2013). Enhancement of self-understanding in the music festival context may shape and reaffirm one's intrapersonal identity sphere (e.g., Cummings, 2007; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Szmigin et al., 2017), one's interpersonal identity sphere (e.g., Croes & Lee, 2015; Laing & Mair, 2015; Pitts, 2005), one's cultural identity sphere (e.g., Avenburg, 2012; Karlsen, 2009; Li & Wood, 2016), one's political identity sphere (e.g., Balzer, 1950; Kiguli, 2013; Sharpe, 2008; Staggenborg et al., 1994), and one's spiritual identity sphere (e.g., Ross, 2013; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). When one is fully immersed in the music festival experience, the activation of one's emotional field guides him/her to engage in meaningful self-reflection (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Laiho, 2004; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). This outcome of engagement in musical experiences is particularly salient for the emerging adult population, as they are in a transitory period of identity exploration and negotiation (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2015; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). Consequently, the music festival experience is an exclusive event that stimulates emerging adults' visceral yearning for psychological wellness via the creation of meaning and fulfillment in their lives (Cummings, 2007; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

Music festivals and accomplishment. As outlined in Laiho (2004), one of the positive psychological outcomes of experiences with music for the adolescent population is an enhanced sense of accomplishment. This finding was also found to be applicable to the emerging adult demographic in the music festival setting (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Specifically, engagement with music in the festival context aided these individuals in feeling like they had accomplished learning more about themselves, leading to increased self-understanding of a reincarnated identity (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

In Ballantyne et al.'s (2014) study exploring attendees' perceptions of the psychological benefits associated with their attendance at the *Woodford Folk Festival* in Queensland, Australia,

the constant presence of music embedded in the festival atmosphere resulted in benefits in the subjective, psychological, social, emotional field, agency, identity, and interpersonal relations domains (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Participants under 30 reported a stronger, more positive festival experience than those over the age of 30, suggesting that the potential advantages of enhanced psychological wellbeing are more tangible for the emerging adult attendees (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Furthermore, there was a positive correlation between length of attendance at the festival and perceived benefits (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Naturally, these perceived benefits yielded a sense of accomplishment for the emerging adult festival-goers, thus empowering them to be powerful agents of change in an effort to maximize their psychological wellbeing long after the event has ended (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Their enhanced sense of self-determination, agency, and competence may also inspire them to implement positive social change; for instance, they may become motivated to confront and amend dominant cultural narratives that govern today's Western society (Laing & Mair, 2015; Sharpe, 2008).

Summary. The music festival context is associated with prompting positive short- and long-term outcomes of affect, engagement, relationship-building, meaning, and accomplishment elements in emerging adults (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011), elements associated with the *PERMA* framework. The *PERMA* framework will therefore inform this study's analysis of findings on the therapeutic experiences of music festival attendance on health and wellbeing.

Overview of Packer and Ballantyne's (2011) Study

Using Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) positive psychology theoretical framework and a two-part exploratory mixed methods design, Packer and Ballantyne (2011) investigated the meaning of music festival attendance from the perspective of emerging adult participants, as well as the positive impact of music festival attendance on their psychological health and wellbeing. The first stage of the study consisted of a focus group with 10 participants from 18 to 23 years of age to explore aspects of the music festival phenomenon from the emerging adult perspective, whereas the second stage involved on-site questionnaire completion about aspects of personal and social wellbeing by 100 emerging adult participants. The focus group yielded four themes of the music festival experience associated with optimizing psychological wellbeing in emerging adults: (a) the music experience, (b) the festival experience,

(c) the social experience, and (d) the separation experience. These themes were validated by data collected in the second stage.

The music experience. Being in such close proximity to the artists and to fellow attendees was reported to facilitate a sense of connection, engagement, and commitment to the present moment (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Feelings of unity and belonging were pronounced in the music festival context, and participants felt they played a vital role in its proceedings, thus enhancing their sense of purpose and achievement. These findings align with those reported by Cummings (2007) and Pitts (2005), who also emphasized the role of music as a mediating factor for psychological wellbeing in a music festival setting.

The festival experience. The festival atmosphere itself was a significant contributor to emerging adults' personal and social wellbeing narratives (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). For some participants, the construction of meaning that resulted from immersing themselves in the festival experience led to perceived authentic personal growth, increased self-acceptance, and an enhanced life purpose. Not only did engagement in the festival experience serve as an ephemeral event in which attendees celebrated their individuality, but emerging adults reported adopting this reaffirmed identity following the festival's end. Similar results were reported in studies by Ballantyne et al. (2014), Griffin et al. (2016), Hallam (2010), Karlsen (2009), Karlsen and Brändström (2008), and Szmigin et al. (2017). According to DeNora (2000), one establishes a coherent sense of present self by first reflecting upon one's past self, and then by negotiating the past self with one's future self; music has the ability to induce this wellness exercise by bringing to mind past memories of the self, as well as by instigating experimentation of possible identities, thus eventually solidifying a present self (Lippman & Greenwood, 2012). As one music festival participant asserted in a study by Szmigin et al. (2017), "I come to live the way that I want to live every day for a weekend but I haven't found a way of doing that in real life yet" (p. 8). At the very least, the festival experience seems to be a point of departure for fruitful identity introspection.

The social experience. One of the factors thought to contribute to emerging adults' psychological wellbeing in the music festival setting is the cultivation of interpersonal relationships. In his ethnographical account of the music festival experience, Cummings (2007) coined the music festival audience a *neo-tribe* of sorts, characterized by its transient shared emotional experience and its mindful focus on the present moment. Akin to this interpretation,

Packer and Ballantyne (2011) emphasized such positive social outcomes of music festival attendance. Specifically, the authors alluded to the formation of *communitas* at the music festival, that is, intense and concentrated interaction of persons in an ephemeral setting resulting in a collective sense of emotional cohesiveness and belonging. Festival-goers also reported engaging in social integration, social acceptance, and social actualization deliberations, rendering them to develop a more hopeful worldview and more optimistic outlook of the human condition (Keyes, 1998). According to Avenburg (2012), music comprises "a cultural phenomenon that provides elements that social actors may use in the construction of collective identities [leading to] emotional and psychic satisfaction" (p. 135). In Packer and Ballantyne's (2011) findings, being in such close proximity to the musical artists and to other festival-goers appeared to prompt a communal connection that incited individual freeness of the psyche, thus maximizing the therapeutic effects of music witnessing for the festival attendee. As today's emerging adults live in an era marked by distinct social division, Packer and Ballantyne (2011) suggest that the present-day music festival setting appears to offer a utopian escape from these societal norms, forming a liminal community conversely characterized by its cooperative reciprocity and authentic acceptance of all human beings.

The separation experience. The fourth and final theme identified by Packer and Ballantyne (2011) as a significant therapeutic factor for the emerging adult music festival attendee's psychological wellbeing is the separation experience, or removing oneself from the demanding expectations and routines of everyday life. By inserting oneself into the novel music festival atmosphere, festival attendees felt free to evaluate some of the unsatisfactory, potentially health-debilitating aspects of their everyday lives, and to ponder upon lifestyle changes they might like to implement upon return. Hence, the music festival experience was reported as promoting an increase in autonomous thought, agency, and mastery wellbeing strategies through self-discovery practice. Similarly, in their study exploring the concept of freedom at today's festivals, Griffin et al. (2016) described the music festival atmosphere as one of temporary relief from everyday pressures in which carefree hedonism is experienced. These features are particularly pertinent for emerging adults, as they require periodic moments of escape from societal demands in order to restore their health and wellbeing (Arnett, 2000). As it is common for young adults to lose themselves in the public persona they are actively constructing during this developmental stage, submerging oneself into the music festival context that transcends

normative societal constraints may aid one to embrace one's true self (Szmigin et al., 2017). In other words, strong musical experiences in the ephemeral music festival setting appears to catalyze reflection of core values integral to a person's happiness, thus promoting inner balance of mental and emotional processes integral to psychological wellbeing optimization (Szmigin et al., 2017; van Goethem & Sloboda, 2011).

As mentioned, the second stage of Packer and Ballantyne's (2011) study consisted of quantitatively validating the significance of the four aforementioned elements of the music festival experience in relation to an emerging adult's psychological and social wellbeing outcomes. The most endorsed questionnaire items were 'I feel happier with myself as a person', 'I feel I have grown/developed as a person', and 'I feel my relationships with others have grown/developed' as a result of having attended the music festival. This research also identified the best predictors of the overall wellbeing outcome variable to be the music experience and the separation experience. Since the therapeutic impact of intense experiences of music listening at music festivals has been explored and documented (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Cummings, 2007; Pitts, 2005), this study sought to explore the therapeutic considerations of a relatively untapped element of the separation experience: the exclusive natural outdoor space setting in which music festivals typically take place.

Nature as a Component of the Separation Experience: Direction of Study

Part of what makes a music festival experience so beneficial for an attendee's psychological wellbeing is the sensation of true separation from daily life stressors. As the location of music festivals characteristically entails separating from urban surroundings and travelling to picturesque nature-bound settings, this study considered the potential therapeutic effects of nature. To what extent is nature associated with an emerging adult's sense of psychological and emotional wellbeing in the music festival context?

Much of the tourism and leisure management literature on music festivals suggests that the chosen destination is a significant motivator for attending a particular music festival (e.g., Blešić et al., 2014; Croes & Lee, 2014; Szmigin et al., 2017; Yoon et al., 2010). According to Mitchell (1950), music festivals that take place "in surroundings of unusual beauty, seem to take on something of the character and aspects of the area in which they are situated" (p. 7). Does the serenity of the natural environment aid in the harmonious equilibration of body, mind, and spirit associated with optimal psychological wellbeing?

Research on ecotherapy or nature therapy offers evidence that human connection to the primordial sights, sounds, smells, and tactile sensations of nature yields advantages for physical and mental health (Brady, 2018; Davis & Atkins, 2004; Hart, 2016; Jordan, 2014; Nisbet & Lem, 2015; Poulsen, 2017; Sackett, 2010; Wilson, Ross, Lafferty, & Jones, 2009). For instance, evidence-based eco-psychological treatments such as sensory awareness, physical grounding, and mindfulness methods have mitigated mental distress for persons with post-traumatic stress disorder (e.g., Poulsen, 2017), for persons with alcohol-related problems (e.g., Seifert, 2014), for hospitalized psychiatric patients (e.g., Vujcic et al., 2017), and with the adolescent population (e.g., Gabrielsen & Harper, 2017). Therapeutic outcomes observed following ecotherapy treatments include (a) reduced levels of cortisol in the body; (b) the calming of nervous system apparatuses activated when in an anxious physiological state, evidenced by regulating rate of heartbeat, slowing respiration, and normalizing blood pressure level; (c) interruption of negative thought patterns due to cognitive structures focusing on the present sensations they are experiencing in the midst of natural stimuli; and (d) awakening and stimulation of meta-cognitive functions that incite boundless creativity, critical thinking, and problem solving (Brady, 2018). Moreover, being directly bodily connected to the earth's surface, known as *grounding* or *earthing*, appears to yield beneficial results (Chevalier, 2015; Chevalier, Sinatra, Oschman, Sokal, & Sokal, 2012). According to author and Vedic educator Adam Brady (2018), "When you make direct physical contact with the earth through your bare feet or by lying in the grass, you reconnect electrically to the battery of the planet. This contact helps to balance the flow of energy in your physiology and has been shown to reduce inflammation, reduce stress and anxiety, as well as improve circulatory function, sleeping rhythms, and mood" (Nature Puts You Back in Touch with the Ground section, para. 1).

The aforementioned findings are echoed in a study by Hinds (2011), which sought to explore the benefits of nature immersion from five emerging adult women who attended a 10-day wilderness experience. Participant reports yielded three main therapeutic themes: (1) *solitude and simplicity*, which comprised an enhanced sense of feeling alive, clarity of thought, actualization of their authentic selves, and overall wellbeing; (2) *challenge and accomplishment*, characterized by notable moments of sociability, increased acceptance of others, and a sense of pride from having thrived in this rustic environment; and (3) *changing perspectives and priorities*, which denoted reflection and affirmation of values, contemplation of worldviews, and

an intimate connection formed with nature (Hinds, 2011). Indeed, it would seem that immersing oneself in natural surroundings appears to promote thoughts of optimism, hopefulness, potentiality, and resourcefulness, spurring one to explore and embody novel ways of thinking and of being (Brady, 2018; Hinds, 2011).

Ecotherapy stems from an evolutionary and anthropological perspective which posits that psychological pathology is a consequence of today's increasingly urbanized and technified society (Brady, 2018; Gabrielsen & Harper, 2017; Hinds, 2011). It is believed that young adults are particularly vulnerable since they are in an impressionable developmental stage marked by instability (Arnett, 2000; Arnett, 2015; Gabrielsen & Harper, 2017). Therefore, it was hypothesized that by nurturing our ancestral predisposition to connect with nature, reigniting our ancestral roots and reuniting oneself with nature, one may achieve a truly harmonious and holistic state of psychological wellbeing (Brady, 2018; Davis & Atkins, 2004; Hart, 2016; Jordan, 2014; Nisbet & Lem, 2015; Poulsen, 2017; Sackett, 2010; Wilson et al., 2009). This study therefore sought to explore the potential ecotherapeutic effects associated with the music festival experience. Some studies on music festivals have alluded to the wilderness setting as a meaningful feature for attendees (e.g., Laing & Mair, 2015; Maddox, 2014; Pitts, 2005; Snell, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2017; Tamulonis, 2017; Yoon et al., 2010). However, none appear to have directly examined this element in the music festival context from a positive psychology perspective (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). For example, Pitts' (2005) article on audience members' social experiences at a classical music festival emphasized attendees' enhanced sense of freedom at this event by being outdoors. This was evidenced by an alleviation of anxiety-ridden symptomology resulting from the physical and psychological constraints of spending most of their lives indoors (Pitts, 2005). Moreover, a study by Snell (2005) touched upon this unique facet of the music festival experience as a catalyst for the formation of *communitas*. Hence, this study served (a) to investigate the healing experience and meaning of nature as part of the music festival scene for emerging adult attendees, and (b) to explore emerging adult festival-goers' perceptions of other factors (e.g., immersion in the music experience) at a music festival that contribute to their psychological and social wellbeing.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The following chapter provides an overview of the research methodology employed in the present study. First, the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research method is defined and explored. Next, application of the IPA research design is described in terms of the research participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis procedures that were executed in this study. Finally, ethical considerations and evaluation criteria to optimize study trustworthiness are discussed.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Originally introduced and developed by British psychologist Jonathan Smith (1996), IPA is a qualitative methodological approach concerned with how individuals experience, make sense of, and attribute meaning to particular personal and social phenomena (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Roberts, 2013; Smith, 2017; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Deep-seated in existentialist, hermeneutic, and symbolic interactionist philosophical assumptions, this research method seeks to explore experience from the perception of those engaged in active interpretation and understanding of life occurrences, as well as the construction of meaning drawn from immersion in such events (Hinds, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2011; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Rooted in the cognitive paradigm of contemporary psychology, IPA posits that one's mental faculties catalyze an individual's ability to self-interpret cognitive and affective reactions to experience (Smith, 2011; Smith 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Thus, IPA underpins the existence of a "connection between embodied experience, talk about that experience, and a participant's making sense of, and emotional reaction to, that experience" (Smith, 2011, p. 10).

According to Smith and Osborn (2008), IPA is a particularly valuable methodology for in-depth exploration of novel and complex phenomenological processes seldom explored in psychological academic literature. Yet, as it is presumed that the researcher can never ultimately gain total access into a selected participant's psychological world, IPA endorses a double-hermeneutic paradigm (Clarke, 2009; Hinds, 2011). This involves the researcher empathically capturing and actively making sense of participant meaning-making regarding the phenomenon of interest (Hinds, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2012). Notable strengths of the IPA methodology include (a) its acknowledgment of the role of socio-cultural contexts in drawing essence and meaning from experience, (b) its contribution to illuminate universal knowledge through study of

unique phenomena, and (c) the potential for its findings to develop and evaluate certain services and therapeutic interventions, as well as to reassess and amend existing theoretical modalities (Clarke, 2009; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Larkin & Thompson, 2012). What distinguishes IPA from other qualitative methodological approaches is its embodiment of the three epistemological principles of (a) *phenomenology*, (b) *hermeneutics*, and (c) *idiography*, all of which are herewith highlighted (Smith, 2017).

Phenomenology. In essence, conducting phenomenological research involves "construct[ing] a possible interpretation of the nature of a certain human experience" (van Manen, 1990, p. 41). The phenomenological movement was founded by German philosopher Edmund Husserl (1970), who sought to devise a rigorous form of enquiry that could thoroughly explore and give voice to participants' perceptions and meaning-making of their life-worlds (Smith & Osborn, 2008). According to Roberts (2013), Husserl considered empirical research of an experimental nature to be "so detached from the fabric of the human experience that it was obstructing our understanding of ourselves" (p. 215). Thus, phenomenology strives to obtain an insider's view of the core facets of a phenomenon in question via eidetic reduction of detailed personal accounts of lived experience within that phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The phenomenological approach personifies two focal views of inquiry and interpretation. The first, coined *transcendental phenomenology*, involves objectively capturing the overall essence and meaning of a lived experience by way of researcher *bracketing* (Ahern, 1999; Creswell, 2013; Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Roberts, 2013). *Bracketing* obliges the investigator to *transcend* his/her everyday assumptions by suspending predisposing beliefs of history, culture, and context that could perhaps bias interpretation of a phenomenon (Ahern, 1999; Creswell, 2013; Husserl, 1970). The phenomenological underpinning of the IPA research method, on the other hand, has adopted the differing view of *hermeneutic phenomenology*, which assumes that researcher bias can never be fully eradicated; rather, *hermeneutic phenomenology* invites the investigator to actively create meaning and make sense of data by interpreting participant accounts of their own meaning- and sense-making of a phenomenon (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Roberts, 2013). This two-stage interpretation notion is known as the *double-hermeneutic process* (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2017).

Hermeneutics. Entrenched in the principles of existential philosophy, hermeneutics is a word of Greek origin that signifies 'to interpret' or 'to make clear' (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The goal of the IPA researcher therefore is to engage in a rich analytical process that entails decoding participant understanding of lived experience through personalized interpretation of the given data (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Hence, in IPA, the data is subjected to a unique process of dual-interpretation, or *double-hermeneutics*, in which the researcher assumes both emic and etic perspectives (Clarke, 2009; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). While an emic perspective positions the researcher in an empathic and attentive state in order to heed rich descriptives of participant experience in the data collection stage, an etic perspective is exemplified during the analysis stage as the researcher attempts to make sense of the data by inserting his/her own interpretative proclivities (Clarke, 2009). Analysis in an IPA study must however be predominantly rooted in participant accounts, and as such are subject to scrupulous and sustained researcher engagement of an idiographic nature (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Idiography. The third and final core feature of the IPA research methodology is the idiographic analysis stage, which involves an iterative and inductive process of interpretation of meaning derived from participant experiential claims (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Smith, 2017). Idiography signifies an in-depth analysis of each case within its individual context, followed by cross-case examination to discover patterns of participant account convergences and divergences (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2017). In Smith (2017), it is emphasized that IPA is not only meant to exemplify empirical rigour, but also to prompt activation of the researcher's creative and explorative inclinations. Nevertheless, although Smith et al. (2009) suggest that IPA be viewed as a flexible methodological approach rather than a prescriptive one, they encourage that the idiographic analysis be guided by the following procedures: Idiography involves (a) thorough exploration and coding of one individual case before moving on to the next one; (b) volitionally interpreting the data, both alone and in collaboration with other researchers; (c) identifying emergent evocative patterns within the data corpus and unveiling convergent and divergent meanings so as to form a gestalt of all accounts; (d) developing a synthesized narrative of super-ordinate themes that encompasses dual-interpretation accounts of both participant(s) and researcher(s); and (e) engaging in ongoing ponderings about one's own biases and perceptions during the interpretative process so as to

minimize their subconscious influence (Ahern, 1999; Finlay, 2008; Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

The Present Study

In order to explore the positive experience and meaning of music and nature as experienced by female emerging adults in the music festival context, the IPA methodology was used (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2017; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). IPA was selected as an appropriate approach because it lends itself particularly well to the generation of novel data, as well as to the consideration of findings within the positive psychology theoretical perspective (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Smith, 2011; Smith, 2017). For instance, Hinds (2011) used the IPA method to study the impact of a Scottish wilderness environment on female emerging adult psychological wellbeing. He concluded that studying experiences of place and the environment from a phenomenological viewpoint is a novel area of interest that warrants further scrutiny (Hinds, 2011).

Research Participants

As emerging adulthood comprises a developmental period from the late teens through the twenties distinguished by its ever-evolving state to explore and navigate life's emotional and social demands (Arnett, 2015), gathering perceptual data from persons aged 18 to 29 seemed ideal for the purpose of this study. Moreover, individuals in this age range comprise the majority of the music festival attendee population (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Li & Wood, 2016; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Wilks, 2011). Finally, as much of the literature reviewed for this study focused on intense music experiences of emerging adults (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Laiho, 2004; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012), it was intended for findings from this project to further contribute to this growing body of knowledge.

The female demographic was selected for study for several reasons. Firstly, there is evidence to suggest that female psychological and emotional growth stems from connection, as opposed to males who typically thrive on status, distinctiveness, and separation (Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Thus, female participants may be more attuned to connection with the music and nature surrounding them in the music festival context. Moreover, females are more likely to engage with music to help them manage personally distressing issues and conflicts of an interpersonal nature (Laiho, 2004). Furthermore, Tkaczynski and Rundle-Thiele (2013) proposed

that academic literary knowledge on female desires, motivations, and experiences for attending and participating in music festivals is significantly lacking. For these reasons, emergent adult female perceptions served as the focal point of this investigation.

Accounts on the utilization of the IPA method suggest that the researcher recruit a fairly homogeneous sample via purposive sampling (e.g., Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). I purposefully selected participants using the following inclusion criteria:

- (a) female individuals aged 18 to 29 years;
- (b) attendance of at least one Canadian outdoor music festival prior to this one in the past 2 years;
- (c) identification of Canadian outdoor music festival attendance as a meaningful part of their lives right now;
- (d) oral fluency in the English language; and
- (e) ability to engage in a focused and coherent conversation.

Hefferon and Gil-Rodriguez (2011) proposed that with IPA, less is more: "Fewer participants examined at a greater depth is always preferable to a broader, shallow, and simply descriptive analysis of many individuals, as commonly seen in thematic analysis, grounded theory, or poor IPA" (p. 756). As such and as recommended by Smith et al. (2009), recruitment of three to five participants was sought for this master's level IPA study. Five participants were recruited for data collection purposes. However, one participant's data was excluded from analysis as she did not fully meet selection criteria. Therefore, a total of four participant accounts were reported in this study's findings. The small sample size served to optimize in-depth engagement and interpretation of each of the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon in the idiographic analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Procedures

Firstly, approval to conduct this research was received by the *Ness Creek Music Festival* Office Manager on June 6, 2018 (See Appendix A), as well as by the Supervisory Committee and the Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at the University of Saskatchewan on July 4, 2018 (See Appendix B). Participant recruitment and data collection for this research project then took place on-site at *Ness Creek Music Festival* from July 19, 2018 to July 22, 2018. The first *Ness Creek Music Festival* was held in 1991 in the Boreal forest in rural northern Saskatchewan.

The modern-day *Ness Creek Music Festival* showcases cutting-edge Saskatchewan, Canadian, and international musicians who play "blues to bluegrass, folk to funk, and nearly everything in between" (Ness Creek Music Festival, 2019). It takes place over four days, features over 30 Main Stage performances, and attracts 3,000 attendees annually: "The *Ness Creek Music Festival* is the only one of its kind; fabulous music combined with community, ecology, and the arts" (Ness Creek Music Festival, 2019).

I went on-site for the duration of this Canadian outdoor music festival. I recruited participants by approaching emerging adult women throughout the *Ness Creek Music Festival* grounds, verbally explaining the process of the study and offering to those interested a letter of invitation in the form of a small handbill. The Recruitment Handbill provided prospective participants with a description of the study, what they would be asked to do, and contact information for the student-researcher and faculty supervisor (See Appendix C). I also informed interested young women to find her at *Nat's Nook*, a designated campground space to conduct the interviews. Furnished with two chairs and a table, this campground space was situated under a bright green umbrella, and was further indicated by a neon pink poster onto which were drawn a music note and the words *Nat's Nook*.

All interviews were carried out near the end of *Ness Creek Music Festival* to maximize participant experience and meaning-making of the event (Hinds, 2011). Prior to beginning the semi-structured interview process, each participant was presented with a Consent Form (See Appendix D), in which they were reminded that participation is of a voluntary nature, and that they could thus withdraw from the study at any point. In addition, they were asked to complete a brief Background Information Form for screening purposes (See Appendix E). The semi-structured interview data collection format was ideal for this study, as it renders both interviewer and interviewee at ease to establish natural rapport with one another, and as it facilitates a sense of conversational latitude and freedom, thereby likely to produce richer contextual data (Clarke, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Each interview lasted between 45 to 75 minutes. After completion of each interview, all participants were debriefed; this entailed an appreciative acknowledgement of their participation by compensating them with a \$15 iTunes gift card, as well as provision of a Debriefing Form (See Appendix G) with instructions for further information and resources regarding the study.

As this study honed in on the impact of the forest setting on psychological and emotional wellbeing, conducting the research on-site was important. As a result, I was also directly immersed in the life-world of the participants in the unique context of a music festival. As recommended by IPA research methodology developers (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008), having the researcher become familiar and wholly engrossed in the phenomenon of interest benefits the richness of the idiographic interpretative analysis, much like an ethnographic study. Thus, the decision to collect data on-site was made in the interest of optimizing trustworthiness and credibility of this interpretivist study (Hinds, 2011; Laing & Mair, 2015).

Data collection. Participants provided first-person accounts about their experiences as female emerging adults who associated therapeutic outcomes with attending a Canadian outdoor music festival. Interviews took place in a partially secluded area near *Nat's Nook* campground space. This interview setting was out of direct attendee earshot, but not too far removed from the scene in the interest of maximizing both interviewee and interviewer's sense of safety.

As recommended by Smith and Osborn (2008) and Smith et al. (2009), an interview schedule was devised in preparation for these semi-structured interviews. Each interview began with the following prompt: "*Please talk freely about your experience of attending this music festival.*" (Hinds, 2011, p. 192). Informed by the interview queries used by Cummings (2007) and by Packer and Ballantyne (2011), the Interview Schedule consisted of open-ended, non-leading questions, as well as possible probes and prompts associated with each question to help participants elaborate answers, if necessary (Smith & Osborn, 2008; See Appendix F). During the interview process, I was fully engaged and present with what the participants were sharing, ensuring I was "really entering the personal/social life world of the participants, or [if I was] forcing them, perhaps reluctantly and unsuccessfully, to enter [mine]" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 62).

All audio from the interviews were recorded using an audio recording device. Each interview was transcribed verbatim so as to capture the semantics of the dialogue, including all auditory features such as false starts, significant pauses, and laughs (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Data analysis. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and idiographically analyzed for interpretation of experience in accordance with IPA analysis guidelines (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008). As noted in Smith et al.

(2009), analytic proceedings comprised the following: (a) a line-by-line micro-analysis and noting of the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual components of the experiential claims, concerns, and understandings of each participant; (b) cross-case identification of the emergent patterns within this experiential material, emphasizing both convergence and divergence, commonality and nuance within its interpretation; (c) thematic formation, clustering, reconfiguration, and relabeling, then organized and developed into a final gestalt that illustrates the relationships between themes; and (d) reflection and reflexive bracketing of one's own perceptions, conceptions, and processes whilst continually immersing oneself in the data (pp. 79-80; Ahern, 1999; Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011; Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014; Smith, 2017). Each of the themes were thoroughly explicated with the use of participant data excerpts comprising active interpretation of their subjective world, as well as my interpretation of their meaning, thus fulfilling the hermeneutic commitment of the IPA research methodology. An all-encompassing narrative of identified super-ordinate themes from the dual-interpretation account of participants and researcher was then drafted (Larkin & Thompson, 2012, Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Ethical Considerations

Approval of this study from the Supervisory Committee and the Behavioural Research Ethics Committee at the University of Saskatchewan (See Appendix B) was obtained before proceeding with the participant recruitment, data collection, and data analysis processes. In preparation for this ethical review, I completed required graduate student ethics coursework.

In accordance with ethical guidelines for conducting research with human participants, voluntary participation was essential for this study's proceedings. Prior to the start of every interview, informed consent was established verbally and in written form. During the consent process, participants were made aware of the measures taken to maximize individual anonymity, confidentiality, location privacy, and right to withdraw at any point during the study. Furthermore, participants consented to audio recording of interviews. Ongoing informed consent was a particularly significant part of the ethical process, since individuals were sharing information of a personal nature. Moreover, participants were orally debriefed at the end of the interview, during which they were asked if there was anything shared during the interview they wished for me to remove from the record. Audiotapes, signed consent forms, and transcripts were made available only to myself and the supervisor; these items are presently securely stored

in the office of the supervising researcher, in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education, for a duration of five years.

Trustworthiness of the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis Research Methodology

The IPA methodological approach recognizes that direct access into a participant's psychological world is never truly attainable, due to the researcher's preconceptions with which he/she interprets and draws meaning from the data (Clarke, 2009). As such, rigorous quality of IPA research requires that the four following dimensions of validity be fulfilled (Shinebourne, 2011; Yardley, 2000; Yardley, 2017).

The first component of IPA research that is assessed for optimal empirical quality of a study is *sensitivity to context*, that is, a commitment to scrutinize the data within the socio-cultural context of a participant's life-world. Sensitivity must also be employed during the participant recruitment, data collection, and idiographic analysis stages of the study. It is of particular importance for the researcher to demonstrate empathic sensitivity and understanding whilst interviewing a participant, thus embodying Ivey, Ivey, and Zalaquett's (2016) therapeutic microskills of communication (e.g., attending and observation skills [i.e., exemplifying culturally and individually appropriate body language, vocal quality, verbal tracking]; encouraging, paraphrasing, and summarizing; observing and reflecting feelings; reflecting meaning and interpretation when appropriate). Finally, the investigator must be sensitive to the data itself, ensuring that participant voices shine through researcher interpretation and theoretical contextualization (Shinebourne, 2011; Yardley, 2000; Yardley, 2017).

An IPA research endeavour must also epitomize *commitment and rigour*. This dimension particularly manifests itself during idiographic analysis, in which the researcher is fully immersed and engaged in the meticulous, rigorous investigation of all data during the analytic process. Moreover, to enhance study validity, the investigator must be committed to treating all willing participants with sensitivity and respect (Shinebourne, 2011; Yardley, 2000; Yardley, 2017).

The third dimension of IPA study quality is that of *transparency and coherence*. While *transparency* refers to "the clarity of the description of the stages in the research process" (i.e., recruitment and selection of participants, construction of the interview schedule, a play-by-play of the interview process, analysis stages undertaken), *coherence* comprises "presentation of an [articulate] argument, yet finding ways to include ambiguities and contradictions inherent in the

data in [an organized, concise manner]" (Shinebourne, 2011, p. 27). Thus, transparency and coherence of a study are achieved when the reader can clearly distinguish between the two stages of the double-hermeneutic process, thereby differentiating researcher interpretation from participant meaning-making yielded from the data (Shinebourne, 2011; Yardley, 2000; Yardley, 2017).

The fourth and final key element that serves to enhance, evaluate, and demonstrate the quality of an IPA study is *impact and importance*. The knowledge generated from the research study must serve a purpose in furthering the epistemological foundations of the phenomenon in question (Shinebourne, 2011; Yardley, 2000; Yardley, 2017). These four aforementioned dimensions are characteristic of the systematic quality of the IPA methodological approach.

One of the strategies employed to ensure rigour in general qualitative research is the compilation of a detailed audit trail of all stages of the research process. This audit trail, completed independently or in collaboration with a research supervisor, provides evidence of all steps taken in the research proposal, data collection, and idiographic analysis stages to ensure precise interpretation of participant accounts (Larkin & Thompson, 2012; Roberts, 2013; Shinebourne, 2011). In this process, researchers are compelled to be reflexive beings, bringing forth any existing implicit presumptions over the course of a project (Ahern, 1999; Finlay, 2008; Hinds, 2011; Roberts, 2013). Indeed, the IPA researcher is actively engrossed in "a dance between the bracketing of preconceptions and using them as a guide to understanding interpretations" (Hinds, 2011, p. 193). Finally, in order to minimize possible issues of self-presentation, resistance of participants to communicate their authentic thoughts and feelings from their life-worlds, as well as the potential imposition of task demands typical of a study rooted in the positive psychology theoretical framework, trustworthiness of an IPA research study can be attained by means of researcher commitment to ensure optimization of safety, comfort, and wellbeing of participants (Hinds, 2011). In this manner, participants can feel fully at ease in exposing their authentic psychological truths to the researcher (Hinds, 2011). These aforementioned validity claims within the qualitative research realm served to maximize trustworthiness and integrity of this study.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this chapter is to present the findings of this research project. The chapter begins with a description of the participants followed by a thematic presentation of findings. Each theme is illustrated with quotes from the interview data that were selected on the basis of their ability to evoke emotion and metaphorical meaning, to elicit empathy, and to spark the imagination of the reader (Smith et al., 2009). In order to protect data confidentiality, each participant granted themselves a pseudonym for use in this manuscript. Moreover, minor editing occurred to increase anonymity. Filler words such as *like*, *um*, and *hmm* were removed to facilitate passage clarity; however, in order to honour the authentic voices of these emerging adult women, language structure was not modified. Quotations incorporate the following symbols and associated meanings: (a) underlining of words (_) indicates vocal emphasis while uttered; (b) a slash (/) denotes a slight pause, or a staggered delivery of words if observed in close sequence; (c) a hyphen (-) standing alone (i.e., symbol not directly attached to a letter) signifies a change in thought, or the emergence of a new thought; (d) an ellipsis (...) denotes the omission of superfluous words unrelated to the phenomenon of study; and (e) square parentheses ([]) signifies added contextual information not originally part of the data extract.

From Jarring Cacophony to Harmonious Equanimity: A Transformative Journey of the Female Emerging Adult Self in Attending an Outdoor Music Festival

In order to provide "a full narrative account which is comprehensible, systematic, and persuasive" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 109), findings are depicted as a journey upon which the reader may embark, a voyage in three parts: participant experiences and reported perceived health and wellbeing (a) prior to, (b) during, and (c) following attendance at *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Much like reading a captivating book, I hope readers become engrossed in the interwoven data extracts and corresponding analytic commentary, becoming part of the hermeneutic dialogue distinctive of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA; Smith, 1996).

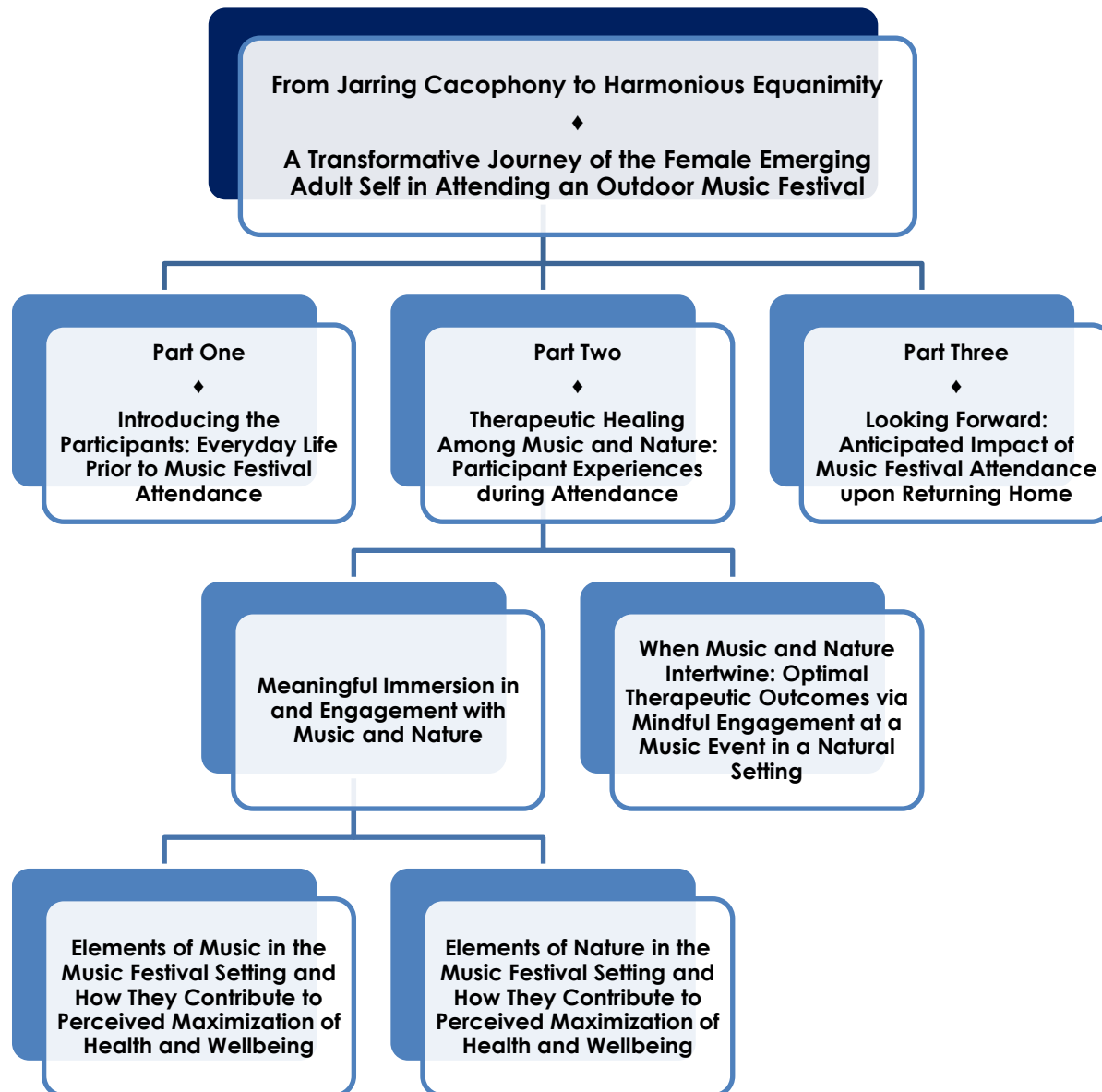


Figure 4.1. Chapter overview and super-ordinate theme layout

Part One

Introducing the Participants: Everyday Life Prior to Music Festival Attendance

Over the course of *Ness Creek Music Festival*, I had the honour of conversing with four emerging adult women – Olivia, Sarah, Maria, and Kyer - about the lived experience and meaning of attending a music festival and engaging with music and nature. The women ranged between the ages of 20 to 27 years of age, had attended at least two music festivals prior to this one, and identified the music festival experience as beneficial to their health and wellbeing. All participants described their everyday lives as having varying degrees of distress – because of

diagnosed chronic conditions such as irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) and bipolar disorder, as well as work-related, personal, and relational stressors, pressures, and expectations. All four women were currently employed: two were in career positions (i.e., health professional, mechanic) and two were students working to support their studies. None were married nor had children.

Olivia. Olivia is a student and works full-time, following a schedule that has little time for self-care or attention to her health and wellbeing. Reflecting upon her life prior to attending this summer's *Ness Creek Music Festival*, 22-year-old Olivia said, "I'm burning myself out all the time." Her emphasis on the word "burning" suggested to me that her busy lifestyle was not satisfying.

It's kind of like I'm just on autopilot sometimes, when I'm in the city? The days just kind of blur together, and I don't feel like I'm just taking a moment and taking everything in because every day is very similar, and just kinda going through the motions... Olivia's daily commitments prevented her from practicing present-moment mindfulness. Furthermore, due to her diagnosis of bipolar disorder, Olivia said it is sometimes hard to judge how much she can do:

When I'm manic, I tend to put myself into more leadership-y responsibilities ... - 'Cause I'm always like, 'Yes. I will do that.' And I'm just all up on everything, and everybody loves me when I'm in this state, that's for sure, 'cause I'm always helping everybody out. This situation was further exacerbated because "people kind of have that expectation of me now." According to Olivia, "I will get asked to do things all the time, and I have a hard time, you know, saying 'no' and taking a step back, and being, like, 'I need to maybe take care of myself.'" Olivia recognized that she prioritizes others' needs over her own, and described suffering from "really bad stress headaches" during which she feels "a lot of pain in [her] head."

Olivia has attended *Ness Creek Music Festival* for the past five years, and she identified anticipation of the event as motivating because it provides temporary relief from her everyday life: "And I feel like, you know, having this in the forefront, something to look forward to, helps me push through that whole city thing?" It seems like the music festival experience might serve as an annual reminder for her not only to prioritize care of her wellbeing, but to also inspire the instillation of helpful and therapeutic habits that may aid in negotiating stressful factors in her everyday life.

Sarah. Like Olivia, 20-year old Sarah also described great anticipation about attending *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Sarah said that for the three days prior to the start of this event, "my work partner ... was just getting so annoyed with me, 'cause I was like, 'Oh my God. I'm so excited to go to Ness! Get three days off work, it's gonna be awesome.'" Sarah appeared comforted in knowing the event was once again soon approaching and as she recollected "how much fun [she] had at *Ness*" for the past three years, Sarah burst with positive emotion.

Also a university student, Sarah was employed for the summer doing fieldwork in a rural bush setting. Her "first ... real-ish summer student job," she described it as "pretty stressful and hard."

A lot of times, you have to try and prove yourself. So, in this job that I have right now, it's very physical, and we're walking long distances in the bush, and we went out with one of our supervisors the other day, and he's seven feet tall, and was just stomping through the bush. And I was just trying to keep up with him, and ... I felt like I couldn't say anything, tell him to slow down because he's my supervisor and I have to keep up, and I have to prove myself that I'm strong enough to do this, and I'm able enough to do this job?

Not only was this work physically demanding, it also appeared to be mentally and emotionally trying. Feeling she "ha[d] to prove [her]self that [she's] strong enough to do this" placed pressure on her to keep up. Further pressures were experienced by Sarah related to being a woman with mostly male coworkers:

Being a girl too, especially, [the] work [is] super male-dominated. It's just a bunch of dudes in big boots, driving big trucks. And then it's me and my partner, who's also a girl... We love the environment and then, everybody else is just there to make money, so I feel, definitely, that aspect of it too, people kind of / immediately think a little bit less of us? They're like, 'Oh, these girls. I don't know if they'll be able to do this work. It's pretty hard.' Even though I'm pretty strong, and physically fit, I can do it, but... I dunno, I just feel like there's definitely in the back of the minds of a lot of the guys that I work with, they're like, 'Should you really be doing that?'[And that judgment] doesn't have to be said at all! ... Sometimes you just know that that's what they're thinking? Even if they would never say it to your face, you know that they're thinking, 'Ugh. I don't know if these girls are doing a good enough job.'

Despite Sarah's expressed conviction in her belief to perform well in this line of work, it would seem she experienced pressure to exceed the expectations of her male co-workers and prove them wrong: "Which is stressful in itself! Constantly feeling like you have to prove yourself to these 40-year-old dudes? It's that stressful!" As a young emerging adult woman, Sarah may have been challenged by these demands. Nevertheless, Sarah appeared physically and mentally perseverant, determined, and strong-willed in intending to keep pace with her male co-workers.

Another challenging aspect of Sarah's work was the perceived obligation to "put up that professional wall," "feel[ing] like you can't really open yourself up completely." By contrast, *Ness Creek Music Festival* was a place where Sarah felt "I can just relax and be exactly who I am, be myself and nobody cares."

Maria. Maria is a 27-year-old health care professional who prides herself in caring for others in her everyday life, although she also noted, "I know I'm so bad 'cause I go for other people's wellbeing a lot!" Maria's instinct was to speak about others' beneficial experiences at the musical festival rather than her own, an indication of her propensity to put others' physical, mental, and emotional needs above her own. In fact, she reported feeling anxious when others seemed unwell: "... I care about ... how everybody else is doing. [When I see people not doing okay], I'm like, [In a whisper.] 'Oh my God. I'm not okay.' Right, anxiety attacks." Others' perceived state of health and wellbeing influenced Maria's own state of health and wellbeing, a pattern she recognized as a possible problem:

And just all these [Maria swallows.] things where I get anxious or concerned or worried, 'cause I'm an organizer, and I ha-, like to be in control, and I'm a nursing background so, I, I have to try and make sure that people are okay, and I can only do the things that are under my control. And if I don't, if I miss something, that could be their life, like. So, control is something that / I / ...use as, I guess, my new coping [mechanism], or something that / is a part of my life, but also ...it can be unhealthy?

Her profession requires that Maria be vigilant. However, being continuously vigilant seemed to exacerbate Maria's anxious tendencies. Although control is a "coping" tool for performing effectively at work, Maria recognized that persistently seeking for attainment of such control may render her fatigued and depleted, therefore allotting little physical, mental, and emotional energy to care for her friends and family members who "fill her well":

I'm sure you've gone through those times where you're heavy, / and you barely can get out bed, or... My one friend was like, 'Maria, I, I thought that you were mad at me.' 'Cause I was just so tired all the time. I had no energy and was just drained. And it was quite out close ... up to coming to *Ness Creek* that I was just like, / 'Holy crap. Like, I don't know what's going on with me. I'm sad. I'm tired. I don't, I haven't had anything to give anymore.'... That's hard, because that's also what filled my well! So, [being] a nurse, it's great, but, ... then you're secluding yourself trying to gain energy.

Maria appeared caught in an internal tug-of-war of care, a "constant battle" to achieve mental and emotional balance in her everyday life. She chose seclusion to replenish her energy, yet reiterated several times over the course of the interview that her social connections, and ability to help others in need, is what rejuvenates her. Maria expressed guilt when she felt unable to fulfill a loved one's needs as expected:

I felt so bad because... And I was in tears, 'cause I was just like, 'I can't - I, I, I know what you need, but, I don't have...' Like, I had nothing left / in me to help. ...Not being able to give what she needed was really hard for me?

Maria shared that she periodically struggles with social anxiety, stating, "Sometimes I'm like, 'Unh, I don't wanna walk on my own / in the city.'" She also described herself as "a worrywart" who once sought to fulfill the "American dream":

'Oh, I should buy a house and I wanna have kids and I wanna...' That, that American dream of ... having it all set up, and having the house before you have the kid, making it all just right, and / it's a stress! I was / thinking about buying a house and thinking about the mortgage and I was stressed out even thinking about it.

The staggered flow of speech observed in this excerpt is suggestive of Maria's anxious tendencies resulting from the pressure on the Canadian emerging adult woman to achieve such milestones in a timely manner. Evidently, "even thinking about it" appeared to be a rather stressful undertaking for Maria.

Maria expressed high expectations of herself and being hard on herself: "I find a lot of times, ... I have a hard time finding my words, and today it would just, I couldn't, ... was like, 'Okay. Where we, where are we?'... It was just like, 'Bleh!'" In this instance, Maria engaged in self-deprecating talk due to her perceived inability to "properly" express herself. Near the end of the interview, she reiterated her perceived difficulty in expressing herself in the manner in which

she aspires, further indicative of her scrutiny regarding a perceived shortcoming to live up to her set expectations as a caregiver: "My friend the other day, she was going through some stuff? And I was like, 'My words didn't come quite right!'" Maria wanted to get the words right because she associates this with effectively supporting others: "I need to, I want to - For me, I need to give or need to support people in order to fulfill my well. ... I need to take time that time for myself as well, but..." On the other hand, following this utterance, Maria moved onto a new thought and using the word "but" suggested her insight about the costs of prioritizing others' wellbeing over her own. Based on her account, it would seem that Maria intended on using this music festival experience as inspiration to not only mentally and emotionally replenish, rejuvenate, and reset, but to also re-evaluate and intentionally set amendments to her daily life priorities in order to most effectively maximize her health and wellbeing upon her return to the city.

Kyer. Born abroad, Kyer moved to Canada at the age of nine. Although she had attended other music festivals, this was her first time attending one set in the wilderness. One of Kyer's best friends invited her to volunteer at *Ness Creek Music Festival*: "I have my First Aid and CPR/AED training, ... so [my friend] was like, 'Hey, you should come work at *Ness* with me. It would be really fun.' And I was like, 'Sure! Why not!'" Although it would appear that Kyer perceived the prospect of attending as a positively exciting novel endeavour, she conversely shared that the choice to attend was in fact a frightening undertaking that took tremendous courage on her part:

Well I have anxiety ... [and] I have irritable bowel syndrome, so my anxiety is tied to that. So, nature is really hard for me to / delve into. / So it was a / hard road / getting here. ...I was throwing up on the way to *Ness*, but, I can't tell if it was / my anxiety or if I got a bit of heat stroke at work. ... I trust my best friend and she said it would be a good experience.

23-year-old Kyer perceives nature as a challenging setting because of her unpredictable IBS flare-ups:

I like to be close to a bathroom, I like my own bathroom. If I'm having a flare-up, I tend to have a panic attack because / I feel sick, but then, when you have really bad anxiety, it / rushes water to your bowels so you end up / being sick even if you / weren't even that sick, so, you know, diarrhea, throwing up, like I've stressed myself so much I've thrown up, and ... it's just how it is.

The staggered vocal delivery of this description reflected the distress associated with managing this chronic condition. In another excerpt replete with slight pauses, she describes being in a metaphorical tug-of-war for control as she sorts out how to live with an unpredictable condition:

I train [in a martial art form]. So, sometimes I can / get home from work and I / really wanna train, but then / my stomach / gets sick, / and then / I - my stomach's / starting to feel / upset. And then, my anxiety starts creeping in, and then it's like, / basically you're not going, and I want to, and then I'm not going, and then I don't go. And then / I usually just end up, / you know, / bawling or crying 'cause I feel like I've let / it / control my life, and I don't want / to live my life like that.

Much like trying to subdue an opponent in martial arts, Kyer appeared to be actively attempting submission of the disease she lives with.

Another source of distress is Kyer's workplace:

Being a female mechanic, I'm the only female in the shop. ... The [only other females working at my place of work] are answering the phones or being receptionists or, / you know, the jobs that have been dictated to only be a woman's job. So, / you know, I have to be / a little tougher, thicker-skinned, you know, I can't, / you know, get insulted and start crying right there fixing a car, / I would be laughed at out of the shop ... And / my / uniform that I have to wear / is, / because, obviously, it's a man's profession, they don't have women's sizes. So to get the right length, ... to get the right pants, they end up being baggy... (Right.) So ... I look like a total dude, and, just, you know, I hate - you know, I like - every woman / likes to feel pretty.

Like Sarah, Kyer is in a male-dominated profession, in a position that offers unique challenges. She described immense pressure to conform to the societal expectations and gender role of a prototypical mechanic, such that she feels the necessity to suppress certain emotional and behavioural traits authentic to her being as an emerging adult woman. Kyer is determined to be taken seriously, to prove herself to her male superiors, doing whatever she feels necessary to survive and thrive in her workplace.

Prior to attending *Ness Creek Music Festival*, Kyer described feeling "stuck in a rut," imprisoned by her everyday life responsibilities and restrained by the structure of a 40-hour Monday to Friday workweek:

I work / eight 'till four. So by the time I get home, the sun's already going away, or I'm just exhausted. So, I just, I wish I could get out, you know, out more. With my weekends, I get two days, you know. What are you gonna do in two days? I have laundry and cleaning and ... grocery shopping, I got chores to do! I got a life to try and / get back in line, ready for my next workweek. It just drones on. Sometimes you get stuck in a rut. And it just, it just drags you down. And then, you ... don't know how to get out of it... And I was definitely getting in that rut before I even came here.

Kyer appeared to have been physically, mentally, and emotionally depleted, feeling "drag[ged] down." Despite her state of "exhaust[ion]," it would seem that Kyer drew upon inner strength to attend *Ness Creek Music Festival*, an experience that would prove to be transformational for her health and wellbeing.

The following section of the findings highlights the healing components of music and nature identified in the data, as well as how they positively affected participants' health and wellbeing. To facilitate identification of the positive effects of music and nature and their beneficial outcomes, the constructs of music and nature are first delineated as separate entities; then, as interwoven entities yielding therapeutic outcomes.

Part Two

Therapeutic Healing Among Music and Nature: Participant Experiences during Attendance

The women experienced therapeutic benefits that they associated with the music festival and its elements of music and nature. These findings are represented by two super-ordinate themes: (1) Meaningful Immersion in and Engagement with Music and Nature, and (2) When Music and Nature Intertwine: Optimal Therapeutic Outcomes via Mindful Engagement at a Music Event in a Natural Setting, as well as two sub-themes found within the first super-ordinate theme: (1a) *elements of music in the music festival setting and how they contribute to perceived maximization of health and wellbeing*, and (1b) *elements of nature in the music festival setting and how they contribute to perceived maximization of health and wellbeing*.

Meaningful Immersion in and Engagement with Music and Nature

Elements of music in the music festival setting and how they contribute to perceived maximization of health and wellbeing. As vividly reported by Maria:

Music is a therapy in itself. ...Music is something that's always been there for me. ...

Listening to music is always something that can bring me up, or stabilize. It's like a grounding feature or a distraction method, you know? I remember when my boyfriend was moving away, and that was a really emotional... And in a way of trying to maintain my emotions, I would listen to music and start singing ... as a way of like, 'It's okay. I don't need to / get out of control about this. You just need to calm doooooown and, like, think clearly.' It's powerful! I think there's a lot of power in music and it's a great / gift.

Music is a constant in Maria's life, an unwavering source of comfort and presence when needed. Music serves as a catalyst for emotional management, helping Maria to "calm down" and "think clearly." Similarly, Kyer commented, "Music can make you feel however you want depending on what you're listening to so, when you're in a sad mood, you can listen to sad music."

In the music festival setting, music not only provides an emotional boost of enhanced positive affect, it can also serve as an energy booster, for example, prompting Maria to follow the sound of music down the windings paths to the *Ness Creek Music Festival* Main Stage.

While immersed in female-duo This Way North's musical performance, Maria noted:

[Their sound] was really upbeat and lively... If you're tired, and you're like, 'Oh! I don't know if I [want to leave the comfort of my campsite]!', but then you hear that music and you're like, ... 'Okay! I got that energy. Keep going and share and continue on with this journey that we're going on...' Yeah! It can / really bring you up.

In this excerpt, Maria alluded to the persuasive effect of hearing music from afar. Interestingly, as three of the four participants were *Ness Creek Music Festival* volunteers, an unexpected and fascinating finding was learning about the experience of hearing music from the First Aid tent, located near the entrance to *Ness Creek Music Festival*, and the SafeNess service tent, located between the Main Stage and the camping sites. For example, Kyer recalled an experience of mindful awakening while listening to folk-bluegrass musical ensemble The Dead South from her post at First Aid: "As soon as I hear the banjo, my ears will like, 'You gotta listen!' And I listen, and I'm like, I kinda like this. It's chill." The "chill" sounds of the banjo prompted Kyer to feel a

sense of "chill[ed]" relaxation herself. In the SafeNess tent, Maria spoke to music's contribution in soothing her and the festival-goers whom she was assisting:

Those people that, 'That simulation was too much!' For them and for me...- You could hear it, but it wasn't so much that it was like a calming background noise? Or, you could hear the music, but then you had the nice social connection of being around the fire, being in the tent... It was a good balance of having the music but not all the simulation? In this case, the music was experienced as "a calming background noise" that complimented the setting of the SafeNess tent. Ultimately, the music helped to fulfill one of the main objectives of the SafeNess service, that is, to relieve attendees of any form of psychological distress they may be experiencing. Thus, it would seem that listening to music from a distance in a music festival setting contributed to the alleviation of physiological and psychological distress for its attendees.

Conversely, Sarah described being close to the stage and visually captivated as she was immersed in the music:

I don't know if it's just, like, a pure human experience of enjoying this art that these people have created with instruments? And just standing there and listening to them play? ... It's definitely something about being there in front of them and watching them make the music that I think is super cool, because you can listen to music anywhere, right? But it's different when you're watching them do it, I think. ... 'Cause you're there, with them, and they're interacting with the crowd, and everybody is kind of in this one big thing that we're doing...

Emphasis on the word "there" would suggest that Sarah was not only physically present, but also mentally, emotionally, and spiritually present during The Dead South's set. When listening to and watching live music, she appeared to be fully engaged, immersed, and engrossed in the moment, a facet of the music festival experience that prompted therapeutic mindful sensory practice. Additionally, musicians "interacting with the crowd" demonstrated that they were inviting attendees into their life-world, perhaps offering attendees with a sense of belonging, of purposeful involvement in the performance. Sarah also alluded to the nurturing of a shared humanity while present at a musical performance, during which everyone had a meaningful purpose in that moment. Sarah seemed to perceive the witnessing of in-the-moment artistic expression as a privilege, during which she have been privy to the musicians sharing an intimate part of their being. The attendees' physical proximity to the artist strengthened the connection

between musician and festival-goer through the medium of art, through which both had the potential to cathartically benefit from the relationship, one symbiotically encouraging the other to feel open, vulnerable, and free to express one's authentic self. Furthermore, Sarah found observing the musicians authentically connected and bonded with one another very meaningful:

Part of it too that I enjoy so much about watching live shows is watching the band interact with each other? And I'm just thinking about The Dead South last night ...They just had such an amazing connection with each other? And to just watch four awesome musicians make amazing music together, right in front of you? It's just really cool. ... Because they're all individual musicians. And the girl on the banjo, crazy. ... Seeing them together playing their instruments, making that music was really cool.

In this extract, Sarah recognized that each musician's individuality was being celebrated. Watching spotlighted "individual musicians" perform onstage and connect with one another may encourage music festival attendees to connect with one another, and ultimately, promote the sense of an enhanced unified humanity. This facet of the music festival experience may just be the "indescribable," ethereal element that inspires festival-goers to attend, that is, to witness peaceful unity and to listen to a harmonious blend of melodies, all of which appear to aid in the restoration of healthful balance sought by all four study participants.

I also wondered if witnessing talent such as "the girl on the banjo," the only female artist in the band, may have been inspiring for both Kyer and Sarah. (Although Kyer mainly experienced The Dead South's performance auditorily, she reported being able to occasionally exit the First Aid tent to see the musicians. Thus, she too would have noticed that the banjo player was the only female artist in the band.) Seeing the female banjoist perform with all other male musicians may have empowered these young emerging adult women to believe they too can keep in their respective male-dominated workplaces, shattering previously experienced prejudices regarding their gender. Ultimately, Sarah appeared awe-struck in this data excerpt, significantly inspired by witnessing this live performance. As a result, she seemed to have been newly and freshly inspired to achieve intentions she may have set for the future following the music festival's end.

Music prompted the joyful gathering of all attendees to the Main Stage, initiating the formation of a supportive *communitas*. Each participant reported feeling like they were an

integral part of this caring and compassionate community. Maria described this experience as follows:

And people like, 'Oh! I've gotta go check out this band! Let's go check this out together!' ... You go to the stage, they're all there! There's a ton of people there together, sharing and enjoying that music together. So it brings, it brings! It brings people together. There's times that I ... / would be away from the music, and all of a sudden I hear it, and I'm like, 'I gotta go! I need to be there!' [Music]pulls you in. It's indescribable sometimes, the pull that music has? Sometimes I think people don't realize it, ... but, / for me, it's just like, 'Woah! That's where I need to be!' And it just guides you there...

Music is depicted as a motivational force with the ability to "pull you in," and to "guide you there," its vibrational and rhythmic energy propelling attendees to congregate in the social space. Maria incarnates music as a "guide," implying that she trusts it to physically, mentally, and emotionally steer her in the right direction. Once arrived at the Main Stage, music further aided in enhancing the "connection" between members of the assembled community: "I think it's that ... connection of just being in a group of people? I don't know what it is about that, but just being in a big group of people is so freeing." Like Maria, Sarah drew great meaning from "being" and "connecti[ng]" with fellow spectators whilst mindfully immersed in a live musical performance. Use of the word "freeing" suggests the experience is "free" of self-conscious thought, of fear, of stress-induced symptomology, components believed to optimize health and wellbeing. Moreover, Sarah finding the phenomenon difficult to describe suggests that its therapeutic impact visceral. When asked how it made her feel, Sarah recounted minimization of anxiety-ridden thought and sensation.

Another source of inspiration deemed instrumental in the optimization of health and wellbeing for the women was the pleasure of "mindful[ly]" engaging and enjoying being in the midst of the music crowd: "I think it's just being super mindful, and being in the moment, and just enjoying the company of the people around you and the music? Because, you can't really get to do that / a lot of the times." In this excerpt, Sarah highlighted the enhancement of positive affect, of a sense of belonging, and of acceptance of authentic self while sharing the music experience with other like-minded folks. Furthermore, such a therapeutic occasion is seldom available for Sarah in her everyday life, an experience for which she expressed significant appreciation throughout her interview.

Olivia drew great meaning from the musical performance of spoken word poet C.R. Avery. She felt "validat[ed]," particularly regarding her worldview and beliefs about the topic of injustice:

Just the way that vocals and what he was talking about really spoke to me? It was about injustice and stuff, and how - That's really important in my life, so just hearing that and validating it and... And having the music and the words come together, it was so amazing! It benefitted me 'cause I just, I kept on thinking about it, and the words that he was saying. I keep going back to all of his CDs and stuff afterwards, and just listening... I imagine that feeling validated, Olivia's confidence, sense of self-esteem, and sense of self-worth inevitably increased, leading her to feel empowered and inspired to continue instilling positive change for the better of the world. The unique blending of music and spoken word was impactful, effectively communicating its intention, and supporting Olivia's passion for social justice issues. Moreover, being able to listen to C.R. Avery's CDs aided Olivia in recalling the positive memories made at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, memories that further "validat[ed]" her social mores and enhanced her self-concept.

Kyer too appreciated the opportunity to discover new "kinds of music," music that may have continued to inspire her once the music festival ended. In her case, listening to the discovered bands' recordings may have empowered her in reminding her how she overcame the symptoms of her anxiety-related IBS in the music festival setting.

In sum, all four participants found the music component at *Ness Creek Music Festival* to be a salient factor in the perceived maximization of their health and wellbeing, one that they may continually access in their everyday life on their journey as emerging adult women.

Elements of nature in the music festival setting and how they contribute to perceived maximization of health and wellbeing. Exploring the meaning and lived experience of immersion in nature in the music festival setting was a novel research endeavour that yielded rich data corroborating its remedial impact on attendee health and wellbeing. Drawing upon primitive instinct, each participant connected and engaged with the natural elements among and surrounding the *Ness Creek Music Festival* grounds. Olivia recanted a "really great moment" at this event and its poignant effect in inducing positive emotional affect:

I was looking up at the sky, and the moon was out and the stars were starting to shine through, 'cause it was starting to be sunset - There was a sunset, and there was a freaking

rainbow in the sky! And it was all at once, and it was fantastic! ... And it made me feel like there's so much beauty in the world, and how I don't need to worry so much about all the negativity, and just enjoy some positivity and some beauty in my life.

The detailed recollection of the natural imagery within which she was visually immersed further confirms that this memory was indeed impactful. The vocal emphasis placed on the uttered phrase "all at once" denotes Olivia having witnessed a synergy of the natural elements in harmony, as if they were making harmonious music of their own. In awe and in admiration of nature's beauty, this moment appeared to have resulted in Olivia feeling comforted and relieved, alleviated of worrisome and negative thoughts. When asked to recall how this moment made her feel emotionally and physiologically, Olivia shared feeling "euphori[c]," "happy," "uplifted," and "joyous," – emotional states that optimize health and wellbeing. Moreover, she described a complete mind-body sensation of "relaxation," with muscles and mind alike relieved of tension and stress.

Sarah identified the experience of camping in a natural setting as particularly meaningful for her health and wellbeing, describing it as a "very relaxing" component of the music festival experience that "makes [her] happy":

I went to a music festival in Montreal. But it kinda wasn't the same? ... 'Cause it's not a camping festival, so, you're still outside and you're in a pretty nice park, but it just wasn't the same. And I was like, 'Enh. I wish I was at *Ness*.'

Camping seemed essential in making Sarah's music festival experience a positive one, contributing to the therapeutic impact of her attendance. Contrasted with the music festival in Montreal, Sarah commented: "Whereas this is so much more personal. People are all camping right next to each other, and you're meeting people constantly..." *Ness Creek Music Festival* involves the intimate proximity of camping near other festival-goers, which facilitates social connections. Meeting new persons "constantly" is an opportunity to nurture and expand social skills, worldviews, and social circle, components of the social self that benefit health and wellbeing.

For Kyer, camping for the very first time represented an initiation into Canadian culture: "Trying to get fully Canadian here. ... You guys are all campers and fishermen and lakes and boats." Camping was not only meaningful as a milestone experience in overcoming her anxiety-related IBS, but also as a form of affirmation of her cultural identity as a Canadian citizen. Such

affirmation may have contributed to an enhanced sense of belonging, thereby having positively impacted her concept of self.

Without prompting, Olivia, Kyer, and Sarah all referred to the powerfully healing effects of engaging with the sounds of nature while lying in their tents. Olivia recounted:

In my tent, especially in the morning, I take a moment, and I just / sit there and think, 'What am I hearing right now? I can hear the wind through the trees. How often do I hear that when I'm at home? How often do I hear beautiful birds and squirrels chirping?' ... It gives me this relaxation, and also this feeling of connectedness with everything, and feeling like I'm a part of it, and that I'm not just one tiny person and, in fact, I'm a part of this big whole thing! Just getting closer to nature is just so important for that connectedness...

Similar to my interpretation of Kyer's account, it seems that Olivia's sense of belonging was enhanced due to being mindfully aware of the natural stimuli. Pondering upon the boundless connection of all natural beings in the universe, she realized that she is a vital component of its creation, which elevated Olivia's perceived sense of purpose in the world. She also appeared greatly appreciative for the space and time to converse with nature, an experience seldom available for her back home.

Being away from the city setting also appeared to facilitate mindfulness with nature's elements for Kyer:

It was raining last night and ... just the sound of it hitting the tent was just so relaxing. And the wind blowing by, you just don't get that [in the city]... So, I wish I could get out more. ... You could just lie there for hours just listening to / the sounds of nature, and you just know it in your body that, / you don't stress, you don't / feel stress. You don't feel / tight in your chest and you just, you know you feel happy. ... [I am] lying in my tent listening to all these noises, instead of thinking about, 'When's my next pay check?' All these bills got to come out.' I'm just fully focused on what is happening right in front of me. ... I'm / listening to these / noises and I'm listening to them for them.

Physically and mentally displaced from everyday urban life, *Ness Creek Music Festival's* natural setting appeared to alleviate distress for both Kyer and Olivia. In contrast to Kyer feeling "stuck in a rut" and Olivia being "on autopilot" in the city setting, both participants expressed a shift in

focus and in locus of control, now internally directed and maximized through present-moment mindful engagement with the natural elements surrounding them.

Sarah also attributed great joy to listening to the "wind blowing in the trees" while "waking up in [her] tent," an experience that was "so nice" and "so peaceful":

I went down to the creek / and went for a swim in the morning. It was so nice. It was just so peaceful, and there was nobody there, and I was just laying in the creek on the water. ... And I was looking at cool dragonflies that were flying along the water, and I'd never seen them before, and then I was trying to figure out what they were. And then there [were] minnows going down the creek...

Sarah's use of the adjective "peaceful" suggests a balanced physical, emotional, mental state, as though the harmonious quality of nature was metaphorically personified in Sarah's being. The isolated stillness of the setting facilitated an enhanced presence and focus on the sensory stimuli, while also allowing her mind to wander and explore, devoid of all stress, pressure, and expectation. Fully immersed in the moment, it was as though she was conversing with nature, attentively exploring the physical and behavioural characteristics of the dragonflies flying by to decipher what they might be. When asked how this experience made her feel physically and emotionally, Sarah recalled the experience as "so relaxing, laying in the water, and I wasn't talking to anybody, and I was just listening to the water ...It's just nice to / just lay there and not have to do anything, and just enjoy it". A feeling of relaxation emerged as she immersed herself in natural surroundings, her emphasis on the preceding word "so" demonstrating a significant decrease in stress. Moreover, Sarah placed repeated emphasis on the verbs "laying" and "lay", suggesting a fostered trust in nature as she floated in the water, its buoyancy metaphorical of being held, comforted, and supported. This interpretation is synonymous with Maria's relationship to the sound of music, its elements fostering a balanced state of being.

Like Sarah's experience, Maria also headed to the creek in search of inner peace and tranquility:

The other morning, I went and I took my coffee to the creek, and sat on that bench in the middle of the creek, and just took a few breaths ... There was a lot going on at the campsite and just like, 'I just need to go hang out by the creek and just refresh.' And it just gives you that refreshing / feeling.

She expressed the need to momentarily escape her campsite, and going down to the creek provided her with that much needed refuge and respite. Moreover, her mindful presence at the creek appeared to have inspired deep breathing, a practice exercise proven to alleviate symptoms of anxiety. While sitting in the creek with friends the day before the interview, Maria recounted the natural elements and their perceived contribution to the optimization of her health and wellbeing:

That peacefulness where we're sitting there in the sunshine, the water's flowing over you, and it's just like a cleansing, you can take a deep breath and just like, 'Hah!' All is good and there's no stress and no worry. So, ... when I'm really able to think about it, nature is, it is healing? ... It's one of those things that I find / fly under the radar for me and I don't take appreciation for it as much as I... / It benefits me without / acknowledgment... Being out here, I've always enjoyed, I love, there's times that I sit and there's the sunshine blowing on me. Or sunshine rays on me, and it's like, 'Oh!' And it's just that calm...

In this excerpt, Maria highlighted nature's curative outcomes for her anxiety, a phenomenon she recognizes as remedial without much conscious awareness on her part. Intention may not be necessary to experience nature's therapeutic benefits; one might only have to be physically immersed in it, surrounded by it. Working as a nurse trained in Western medicine, Maria further pondered upon modern society's tendency to underutilize the healing sources of nature, underappreciated and underemphasized in a capitalist culture driven by the profits of consuming synthetically-created pharmaceuticals:

Our Western medicine has a really hard time grasping that. And there's [a] time and place which I think [Western medicine is] amazing. The heart procedures they can do, but... / You know, you can - Not always, / but a lot of times prevent heart attacks and artery clog up, by being out in nature and walking around and getting part fresh air, and eating / food that comes from your environment... It goes back to very basic things of nature / to be healthy! It's so simple, but we / don't grasp it. Doctors get very minimal nutritional / education. ... So, nature has a power that for some reason is not / acknowledged to the extent it probably should be. Maybe 'cause it doesn't make money, or something? I don't know. Our society tends to - Pharmaceuticals make a lot of money so, ... pharmaceuticals have a time and place, don't get me wrong, but I think they get pushed a little too quickly sometimes...

Maria mentioned the "simpl[icity]" of benefitting from such curative effects, but emphasized that modern-day society fails to "grasp" them and utilize them to their advantage.

To further explicate society's underutilization of nature's healing elements in the city setting, Maria suggested that individuals may be judged for engaging in sensory mindfulness exercises practiced in the non-judgmental music festival setting:

In our society, people are like, 'What are you doing?' ... [Here,] ... you see people laying on the ground or sitting on the ground and feeling grounded. Or people walking barefeet. ... They're using that as their ...method to ground or feel / stable in all the waves of life, where with everything coming at you and going at you, it's like. 'It's okay. We're good. We're grounded.'

In this extract, two mindfulness-based sensorial grounding techniques are mentioned that outside of the music festival setting might be perceived as socially odd. Conversely, the music festival setting is perceived a "comforting space", in which Maria connected with its natural elements and therefore disconnected from her symptoms of anxiety. Indeed, all study participants reported that engaging with and immersing themselves in nature's elements positively impacted their health and wellbeing. By listening to nature's language and communicating back with sensorial mindfulness, by being viscerally in harmony with its elements, and one with nature's entity, these four emerging adult women achieved physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual equanimity.

When Music and Nature Intertwine: Optimal Therapeutic Outcomes via Mindful Engagement at a Music Event in a Natural Setting

This section explores the healing effects of interconnected immersion in music and nature at *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Whereas the women described some experiences as related to either music or nature, other experiences involved interwoven facets of music and nature that were perceived as optimizing positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. For example, Sarah fondly recalled the evocative natural imagery during The Dead South's music performance at the Main Stage:

Crazy! And so I just remember I was just standing there, and there was lightning in the distance! And the sky is shooting lightning, and it was super windy, but it was a warm wind. And everybody was just jumping around, and having fun, and that was so good. And it's just like, you know, you can't experience that anywhere else, right?

The vivid description of nature's elements, as well as the expression "Crazy!" suggests that this was an experience of high positive emotion and significance that will be remembered for years to come. Fellow attendees "jumping around," unified in the beat of the music, could be experienced as a manifestation of a unified *communitas* to which she felt a member. Moreover, "the endless silhouette of the trees behind the stage" could have evoked a sense of universal boundlessness, of visceral connection to the cosmos in which our Earth exists. This interconnectedness was part of an experienced Olivia described:

When I'm in the music, and I can see, especially late at night, or when the sun starts to set, the Main Stage, and you have this big booming music running through you... And you can see all the trees, and the sky, and you just feel connected to everything. At that moment, I'm just totally chill, and I don't feel anything is going wrong at all. And that happens every year, I have that moment.

Olivia's focus on present-moment stimuli minimized all sense of worry and stress. Her engagement with music included hearing the sounds and feeling its vibrations and rhythms in her body. This primal connection to music was synonymously personified in her bonding with elements of nature. In the moment, Olivia felt like all living kind, including herself, was somehow interconnected and had a purpose on this Earth:

I think there's a lot of time for reflection out here, especially when you don't have any cellular service, so you're not constantly checking your phone or your emails, or worrying about all this external crap, and just kind of focusing on, 'Who am I?' and 'What am I - What's my role in the world?' And being interconnected with nature out here makes you realize that you're supposed to be out here.

Olivia experienced a sense of purpose, of belonging, and of meaning as she felt "interconnected with nature," in the midst of the music festival. Due to temporal and spatial restrictions and distractions, as well as the numerous stressors, pressures, and expectations faced by the female emerging adult population in their everyday lives, all four women claimed this existential self-reflection was unusual. It seems that the nature-bound music festival setting offered the temporal and spatial freedom to ponder upon, evaluate, and perhaps adjust parts of the self in order to optimize health and wellbeing.

Additionally, Olivia identified the absence of cellular service in the remote music festival setting as another factor that facilitates mindful self-reflective practice and reduces worry and

stress. Kyer concurred: "The fact that they're doing it in nature gets you out of the cities, away from your cell phones, and, just, free, that you don't get, staying in the city." Immersion in the *Ness Creek Music Festival* setting prompted disconnection from everyday life, an escape and release from everyday life stressors, pressures, and expectations experienced by the four female emerging adult attendees. Sarah too noticed the therapeutic outcomes of cellular service scarcity cocooned in Saskatchewan's Boreal Forest:

Because it's like you're in a completely different world here, right. You're so closed off. I never have my phone on me because I don't get service, which I love. That's one of the main things I love about *Ness* is that [we are] forced to not have service, so, you can't be on your phone. I even noticed that last night at the show too, 'cause I was thinking about this before, how, whenever I go to concerts and stuff, just in the city or whatever, people are always just videotaping, and taking pictures of themselves, and I just think it's silly! You're at a music show, and you're just holding your phone there. You're not really... you're not really there? But that's why *Ness* is so special, because no one had their phone out! Literally everybody was just dancing, and hugging their friends, and having the best time.

Disconnecting from social media allowed for an authentic, fully immersed, mindfully present state to connect with the elements of music and nature, as well as with other music festival attendees. Despite attendees being able to use their phones to videotape parts of the performances, "no one had their phone out," suggesting all attendees were equally invested in being part of this mindfully-driven milieu, fully engaged and fully immersed in the present moment. When everyone present, including oneself, is in such a state of mindful awareness, health and wellbeing are maximized. Sarah reflected upon this beneficial facet of the music festival experience:

I was thinking about this while I was standing in the crowd too. It's crazy how, just, a music show outside? People coming together, and being really close to each other and just dancing? I don't know what it is, but there's something about that just makes everybody happy, you know? You can't be sad in a crowd like that. It's just something that's so happy because ...there's nothing else to focus on except for / the band and the cool lightning storm that's going on, so... I think that's all it is, is it's just you

completely there in the moment. There's nothing else that you can think about other than how awesome it is.

The elements of music and nature promoted a therapeutically beneficial state of present-moment mindfulness, a state of collective being, and a unified sense of happiness. According to Sarah's account, the gathering of attendees to the Main Stage and their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual proximity benefitted her health and wellbeing. In this setting, sadness was minimized, and happiness reigned. The abundance of positive emotion was infectious.

One of the quintessential experiences at the *Ness Creek Music Festival* that features the curative interconnected elements of music and nature is the Drum and Dance Circle. Maria recounted how she overcame troublesome anxiety by immersing herself in a serene and secluded forested area, and witnessing other festival-goers play and dance:

The Drum Circle's one of those things I'm like, 'I gotta go!' Because / I get scared to play the drum and contribute 'cause of my anxiety and nervousness, something I'm gonna work on? ... I'm hoping one day, I'll be able to play and feel open to let that out?...

The beat is powerful and it takes you in, and then you hear it... ... There's power in those vibrations, and they all work together to make that music work together... ...

I have a really good friend, [and] she'll dance in the middle of the Circle. And it's just beautiful, and mesmerizing... Just even watching her, makes [my] heart melt. ... And even if it wasn't her. Watching other people get into it... ... There's a healing in it and a power in it, and you can see they're just being free, and can be themselves, and be comfortable. I think there's a power in that.

By choosing to attend the Drum and Dance Circle, Maria faced a fear that rendered her anxious and nervous. The music festival environment provided her with the safe space in which she felt comfortable to take risks and to overcome her fears head-on. By mindfully honing in to the beat's "powerful" melodic and rhythmic frequencies, as well as the movements of her friend's dancing, Maria's worries and stressors "melt[ed]" away from her emotional centre, thereby alleviating her symptoms of anxiety. In addition, watching others "being free," "be themselves," and "be comfortable" motivated Maria to also "let go" of all stressors and discomforts. By trusting in the "power" of the moment, Maria became immersed in the restorative energy emerging from the harmonious musical and natural symphony.

Sarah too drew great meaning from her experience at the Drum and Circle:

I was at the Drumming Circle one night. And I'd never really been [...] when it was in full force? And that was a pretty cool experience. Because it's just another one of those things where the people that were around the fire, drumming, they were just / so / entranced in their drumming, and they were just so deep in the rhythm... And it was just so cool to just sit there and watch people. And then I jumped in and started drumming a little bit, and... It's all these things when you're just focused on whatever is happening right then that I think is the most beneficial for my health?

In this unique experience where music meets nature, Sarah became transfixed by the sensory stimuli, mindfully engrossed in the present moment. Like Maria, participating in the intertwined dance of music and nature led Sarah to overcome initial anxiety-ridden discomfort:

And I was a little cautious at first, and a little uncomfortable? But then I got there, and everybody was just so nice, and so / welcoming, and they were sharing their drums with me. ... I just think things like that where you step outside your comfort zone, where, when I was younger, I probably would've been like, 'Unhunh. I don't wanna do that.'

The supportive community of people helped make Sarah feel at ease, safe to try a novel activity she might not otherwise have tried. Indeed, her hesitance in uttering the word "step" could reflect Sarah's initial uneasiness attempting an activity outside of her comfort zone. However, engaging in novel experiences that bring one joy contributes to health and wellbeing. Moreover, this experience likely led to an increased sense of accomplishment, of pride in oneself, and of self-confidence.

The supportive, accepting, and non-judgmental natural setting of *Ness Creek Music Festival* also facilitated dancing with abandon at the musical performances:

Just being in a crowd of people and dancing, I think is a big thing? ...Growing up as a girl too, you often are self-conscious about what you're doing, and how you / look. But just being able to be in a big crowd of people, and everybody's dancing, and you can dance, and just enjoy yourself, and not be thinking about, like, 'Oh! People think I'm dancing weird.'

According to Sarah, women learn from a young age to behave in a behaviourally- and gender-appropriate fashion, aware of "what [they're] doing, and how [they] look." This can incite an unhealthy "self-conscious" perception, one with which Sarah admittedly continued to struggle. However, the music festival setting interrupted this unhealthy thinking and encouraged young

women such as Sarah to behave however they choose. Maria described a similar experience of losing self-conscious thought while she was immersed in This Way North's musical performance at the Main Stage:

I'm not somebody - I've always been, / shy, especially, ... I don't like dancing or grooving... So when I have music that I can just easily / let go... It's so hard to let go. We hold so much in... I hold back a lot 'cause I'm scared of what / I look like. Whereas here, / for one, the music is really therapeutic and can get you into that feel. But then also the people around you, ... they're letting go and they don't care either!

In her account, Maria attributed "the sound and the vibrations" of the music as a catalyst for release and eradication of fearful, worrisome thoughts. This mental and emotional release led to a physical release expressed through movement, one devoid of beliefs about how a woman should dance.

Through dance, Maria and Sarah abated unhelpful self-conscious thoughts that compromised their health and wellbeing. They were liberated, authentically expressing themselves and optimizing their health and wellbeing through mindful immersion in and engagement with the healing vibrational energies emitted from music and nature.

As an individual who also struggles with anxiety related to managing IBS, Kyer too perceived the interwoven elements of music and nature as very helpful: "Music and nature just helps you, it gives you that wind that you need to / get through..." She personified music and nature as "wind," a motivator that carried her through her health-based hardships. She further added:

As soon as I got here, listening to the music, pounding super loud, people dancing, pitching my first tent... I just, I feel / so much better, and I can notch that off that I / did that and pat myself on the back that / I came to enjoy this, and I didn't let / anxiety stop me from / trying something.

In sum, the conjoined therapeutic effects of music and nature in the music festival setting appeared to be salient factors in the reinstatement of harmonious physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance for these women.

Part Three

Looking Forward: Anticipated Impact of Music Festival Attendance upon Returning Home

As this study sought to uncover participant experiences with the elements of music and nature over the course of a Canadian outdoor music festival, this section was not originally anticipated. Nevertheless, all participants shared anecdotes on how they expected the healing effects of music festival attendance to extend following the conclusion of the event. This section provides the reader with a glance of how attendance at *Ness Creek Music Festival* and immersion within its curative elements of music and nature could enhance participants' health and wellbeing beyond the festival's inevitable end.

Olivia. As an avid festival-goer who has been attending *Ness Creek Music Festival* for the past five years, Olivia possesses great insight on post-festival benefits for her health and wellbeing. Not only has mindful engagement with music and nature aided in alleviating distressing physical, mental, and emotional symptoms of bipolar disorder, it also mentally and emotionally replenished her, refuelling her for the workweek to come. Moreover, as a result of attendance, she claimed to have "gained a lot of social skills," and "a lot more confidence in [her]self and [her] abilities," "especially with volunteering, and / being able to be that support for people is really important in my life." Like Maria, "helping other people" is an integral factor in Olivia's life that contributes to her wellbeing and provides her with a sense of purpose, meaning, and accomplishment that she and others value. Additionally, practicing and developing supplementary social skills seems to enhance her ability to nurture positive relationships and social connections within her public life:

There's lots of times where I'm really shy, and I'm not able to feel like I can approach people, 'cause I'm not sure if somebody is approachable, then - So that shyness ... falls away at least for a few months after I come here? ... If I'm sitting at a table in a public space, ... I'll be like, 'Hey! How are you doing?'... I do some writing workshops and stuff in the community for different things, ... so there was one time where [I was] running a workshop on ally ship, and / I had some folks all coming at once, and my instinct in my head was to ... just let them take their seats as they come in, and then, once everybody's here, then we can talk to each other! And we can have a discussion, and I can talk you through the workshop and everything. But instead I was like, 'Hey! How's it going? Let's

get to know each other. Let's get each other's names...' And that was right after *Ness*, so it just kind of makes me a bit more outgoing in my everyday life as well, yeah.

Olivia expressed that she is a natural introvert. As such, her instinct is to "shy" away from connecting with people. This minimization of introvert tendencies following the music festival's end not only appeared to positively affect her, but also the others with whom she interacted, making for a more positive, inclusive, and compassionate world. It is possible that Olivia's trust in humanity was optimized in the music festival setting, a therapeutic effect of *communitas* from sharing in the immersive experiences among music and nature:

Whenever I come [to *Ness Creek Music Festival*], I think that every day should be more like this? And I try and make it a little bit more like this, try to be friendlier to other people, and not looking down as you're walking by people on the street, and making eye contact, and be connecting, and be like, 'Hey! You're another person! We're here together!' - And I think that a lot more places should be, like, so connected like this, and it also makes me feel like / people should have the opportunity to get out into nature more, like this, and connect with each other.

Olivia asserted that enhanced connection with other human beings is facilitated by immersion in nature. Not only is one's individual connection with nature conducive to enhancing one's own health and wellbeing, but also one's awareness of a collective connection with nature, thus further promoting a sense of shared unity. This belief may minimize feelings of loneliness and isolation, emotional states thought to threaten the health and wellbeing of individuals in today's society. Moreover, Olivia perceived that the way that life is lived in the *Ness Creek Music Festival* setting should be emulated in everyday life, thereby taking away what she has learned and practiced over the course of the event and applying it to create a better world. Such attempts to connect with unfamiliar folks through "friendli[ness]" and "eye contact" not only enhanced Olivia's sense of belonging, meaning, and purpose in this world, but may also brighten another's day by silently communicating that they too matter, they too are noticed, they too belong, they too have a purpose.

Sarah. Three-time *Ness Creek Music Festival* attendee Sarah reported that every year, she leaves the event feeling like she had learned something new about herself, particularly about minimizing an inward focus on unhealthy thinking patterns governed by "self-conscious[ness]":

Just thinking about all of the things that I / have kind of learned about myself here, things like being self-conscious ...'Cause a lot of times you're so focused in your own head, and / your own / self-conscious ideas? But then I kind of realize that everybody else probably has moments like that too, where they're like, 'I feel weird.'... Just that realization that other people probably feel the same way as you? And, like, if you're feeling, if you felt uncomfortable in this moment before, somebody else probably feels uncomfortable too. Much like Olivia's account, a contrasting outward focus promotes a sense of shared humanity, that one is not alone in feeling, thinking, and behaving a certain way. Sarah's realization that she shares such commonalities with other attendees may very well help her manage everyday life stressors, pressures, and expectations, feeling accepted unconditionally by others. Moreover, a sense of a compassionate shared humanity may catalyze Sarah to continue trying novel endeavours, engaging in fruitful self-exploration, and expressing herself more freely. When one feels like she is not alone in her pain and suffering, the negative effects of such pain and suffering can be mitigated. When Sarah feels supported, comforted, accepted, she may perceive components of her life as more positive and fulfilling. Sarah confided:

I feel most happy when I'm just completely comfortable, / and I'm not / worried about anything, and I'm not in any pain or thinking about stressful things. Which is why *Ness* is so awesome! Because there's nothing stressful here, other than, 'Is it gonna rain? I don't know!'

In this data excerpt, Sarah believes her level of happiness is maximized (a) when she feels at ease, not self-conscious, and not feeling judged by others; (b) when "worry" is minimized; (c) when physical, mental, and emotional pain is non-present; and (d) when rumination "about stressful things" is minimized. While participating in the Drum and Dance Circle, Sarah reported a temporary release of any sort of mental, emotional, or cognitive chaos. It is possible that engaging and immersing in the elements of nature might lead her to practice compartmentalizing stressful circumstances outside of the music festival setting, so as to render them more manageable. Moreover, having this novel experience among the comforting elements of music and nature appeared to rejuvenate Sarah's sense of self, one characterized by an increased sense of resilience in the face of hardship.

The inspiration that Sarah drew from watching The Dead South's musical performance is yet another way that the optimization of Sarah's healing and wellbeing prompted in the music

festival setting may transfer into post-festival life: "Watching people just play instruments, and be really good at it, and do really awesome things, it's like, 'Man, that's crazy!'" As previously noted, observing the only female player perform may have resulted in Sarah feeling empowered to stand her ground and no longer allowing her fellow male coworkers' gender-prejudiced judgments to burden her and affect her renewed sense of self-confidence and self-assurance upon return to her work setting.

Maria. Renouncing control to the elements of music and nature "guid[ing]" her to optimal health and wellbeing was a meaningful part of Maria's experience at *Ness Creek Music Festival*. In particular, Maria emphasized how the natural surroundings provided temporal and spatial freedom to introspectively reflect upon, re-evaluate, and set intention to replace unhelpful thoughts and behaviours that minimize her health and wellbeing in the city setting:

Being outside of the city and re-evaluating your life, like, 'Okay. What what's helping me, what's not helping me. Where do I need to go.' Being able to just kind of look at it / when you're not caught up in it. I don't know if you've ever been in a relationship / or something that's toxic or not healthy? ... And everyone else sees it, but then you don't see it, until you get out of it and you're like, 'Woooah! I can't believe it took me that long to figure that out.' ... Just realizing what's really important in life.

In this extract, Maria metaphorically compares escaping her everyday life circumstances prior to attending to leaving a "toxic," "[un]healthy" relationship. No longer "caught up" in her daily life stressors, pressures, and expectations, she was able to discern what she ought to prioritize and value upon return to "fill her well: "...Also realize that I need those other connections, and also fulfill those relationships, and sort of take that time and not feel like it's an energy drain, but realize that it's healthy and important." Through contemplative practice in the music festival setting, Maria realized that when she gets "caught up" in the thick of home and work life responsibilities, she "forget[s]" about how fulfilling it feels to belong, to be comforted, and to be accepted in the realm of her social identity. By rejuvenating those relationships, unhelpful factors that hinder her health and wellbeing in her everyday life may be mitigated.

With renewed motivation to replicate maximization of her health and wellbeing outside of the music festival setting, Maria recognized the therapeutic importance of a sustained connection with nature. Upon return to Saskatoon, she intended on "go[ing] to the river," and harness nature's energy that she claims promotes free flow of introspective pondering. At *Ness*

Creek Music Festival, she reflected upon the "blockage" of energy she typically experiences in the city setting, metaphorically suffocated from concrete industrial structures and an overabundance of physical objects and goods. In contrast, she recognized the "different kind of energy" emitted from a tree, one that restores and revives Maria's mind, body, and spirit. Moreover, immersion in nature's elements not only quietened Maria's physiological and mental symptoms of anxiety, but also prompted her to reflect upon unhelpful behavioural and thought patterns that increase her anxiety symptomology:

I realize, like, 'Okay. / Don't need to stress about all these things. Don't need to make this such a big deal.'... Back in the city, what am I controlling? What am I trying to... How am I... Are these coping mechanisms the best way? Is there another way to look at it? In this moment of self-discovery, Maria mindfully contemplated on the meaning of control in her everyday life: Is yearning for constant control truly a helpful coping mechanism as initially believed, or does it conversely possibly hinder in her ability to cope with her anxiety? Introspective self-reflection in a natural setting prompted Maria to question beliefs that ultimately disserve her health and wellbeing in the city setting.

Converging with Sarah's account, Maria too anticipated minimization of self-conscious thought as a result of her experience at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, particularly social interactions on city streets. Rather than taking it personally if unfamiliar persons choose not to acknowledge nor connect with her, Maria realized their disregard may not be directed at her:

On the street, it bothers me that sometimes people don't acknowledge anything, or is so disconnected. And that happens and it's okaaaay, and sometimes that's what they need is their space, and there's a time and place and that's okay. So I think, just making that acknowledgment of understanding people, and it's not necessarily like they're trying to offend me by not saying 'Hi.' back, but maybe they're going through something, ... and not to take it personally? I think it's really easy to feel that energy and be like, 'Oh no. Did I say something wrong...'

Although Maria reported having difficulty maintaining relationships with her loved ones prior to attending *Ness Creek Music Festival* due to lack of physical, mental, and emotional energy, she paradoxically struggled to understand that other individuals may not be able to provide her with the support and consideration for which she longs. Maria left the music festival setting realizing that despite her efforts, others may also want privacy or be reluctant to connect. Rather than to

take offence of others and their behaviour, Maria appeared to have a heightened understanding of others' inner worlds and perspectives, and a renewed intention of being supportive, compassionate, and unwaveringly accepting of their state of being. Indeed, challenging this thought may have aided Maria in further minimizing such anxiety-provoking beliefs upon returning to the city setting, and may have inspired her to also be supportive, compassionate, and unwaveringly accepting of herself, particularly when in an anxious state.

Just like Olivia, Maria yearns to continue promoting unity, universal acceptance, and non-judgment of *communitas* in the streets: "The connection on the street, a simple acknowledgment that we're all in this together and we're all here, and, like, 'Hey. Hope you're doing well.'" Maria reaps mental and emotional nourishment from nurturing her close social relationships, as well as from contributing to the connectedness of humanity. She wants to continue her attempt to make the world a better place for all, but with affirmed minimization of unhelpful self-conscious thought patterns that exacerbate her anxiety.

Kyer. As observed in Maria's case, Kyer's symptoms of anxiety were also alleviated as a result of attending *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Without modern plumbing directly available to music festival-goers, Kyer was anxious to attend such an event, fearful that her anxiety-related IBS symptomology would manifest itself. However, in overcoming this trepidation, and attending and experiencing the therapeutic factors of the music festival setting, Kyer reported a renewed sense of courage to endeavour in other novel adventures she might otherwise have never entertained: "And I don't / feel so anxious going to do this next adventure because of this, right now." Furthermore, Kyer asserted that she now has a more positive perception of her sense of accomplishment:

I feel like I can accomplish more. ... Just the fact that my anxiety / wasn't / a part of any of this weekend. And I know that / now I've done it once, I can do it again and again and again.

She discovered an authentic passion for nature, which inspired her to further pursue its healing elements:

I / feel like I'm definitely gonna get more into camping in the summer. I'm hoping to go up to Candle [Lake] actually, in three weeks. And I'm gonna do the same thing where - I got a campsite rented and... Another new experience at a lake, and I've never been on a

boat, and I've never wakeboarded, and I've never experienced any of that. And, my best friend's taking me, so her parents / have a house out there but, I wanted to tent. Even though she could have stayed in her best friend's parents' house, she intended on camping instead, an activity Kyer perceived as greatly enhancing her health and wellbeing. The *Ness Creek Music Festival* experience seemed to have catalyzed a desire for more outdoors-oriented activities, which also have the potential to maximize her health and wellbeing via continued engagement with nature.

As reported in the accounts of Olivia, Sarah, and Maria, Kyer too shared feeling physically, mentally, and emotionally replenished and rejuvenated for the next workweek: "And now I can go back to my next workweek feeling a little relaxed and actually chilled out ... Now I am ready for the next workweek." Indeed, through maximization of Kyer's health and wellbeing in the music festival setting, she felt ready to tackle any challenge that may come her way at her place of employment, and ultimately better prepared to manage the stressors, pressures, and expectations that accompany her work in a male-dominated profession.

Summary

This chapter furnishes the reader with an insight into the psychological life-world of four female emerging adult participants, all of whom perceived immersion in and engagement with the elements of music and nature at a Canadian outdoor music festival as beneficial to their health and wellbeing. The chief objective of the IPA qualitative research methodology is to "capture and do justice to the meanings of the respondents to learn about their mental and social world, [...] obtained through a sustained engagement with the text and a process of interpretation" (Smith & Osborn, 2008, p. 66). As such, audio-recorded individual interviews lasting between 45 to 75 minutes in length were transcribed and analyzed through identification of patterns of meaning with the data. After each single case was thoroughly and idiographically analyzed, exploration of experiential patterns across cases followed, from which a double-hermeneutic interpretative narrative emerged.

Through continual phenomenological immersion in participant accounts, data emerged as a journey of participant experiences of health and wellbeing (a) prior to, (b) during, and (c) following attendance at *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Findings were therefore depicted within two super-ordinate themes: (1) Meaningful Immersion in and Engagement with Music and Nature, and (2) When Music and Nature Intertwine: Optimal Therapeutic Outcomes via Mindful

Engagement at a Music Event in a Natural Setting, with two sub-themes found in the first super-ordinate theme: (1a) *elements of music in the music festival setting and how they contribute to perceived maximization of health and wellbeing*, and (1b) *elements of nature in the music festival setting and how they contribute to perceived maximization of health and wellbeing*. From these results, it would appear that mindful engagement with the elements of music and nature in the music festival context yield remedial effects for emerging adult women's health and wellbeing, its therapeutic benefits transcending beyond the temporal and spatial confines of this event.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

The following chapter begins with an overview of this research project's contextual relevance and rationale, followed by a summary of the findings and their integration within existing literature. Next, the strengths and limitations of this study are delineated. Directions for future research are then discussed. To conclude, research implications for practice dedicated to mental health professionals and educators and music festival design and management teams are outlined.

Overview of Study Relevance and Rationale

In today's Western society, it would appear that the emerging adult woman is faced with elevated levels of stressors, pressures, and expectations that exceed their ability to physically, mentally, and emotionally cope (Lamont, 2011; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Hinds, 2011; Strömbäck, Wiklund, Renberg, & Malmgren-Olsson, 2015). Dornbusch (2000) has even suggested that the emerging adult stage of human development is the most taxing of all on one's health and wellbeing. Results of a recent national survey in Sweden highlighted that mental health disorders have increased by 25% in the young adult population, particularly among females between 20 to 29 years of age (Strömbäck et al., 2015). As a result, the researchers have declared mental distress among this age and gender cohort "a serious public health concern [...] globally" (Strömbäck et al., 2015, p. 234).

Detrimental health outcomes of the modern female emerging adult population that may emerge from the stress of such exceeding environmental demands include anxiety, depression, burnout (i.e., exhaustion disorder), and psychosomatic complaints, as well as a decrease in self-esteem, self-affirmation, and positive self-image (Bamber & Schneider, 2016; Khoury et al., 2015; Strömbäck et al., 2015). A related factor thought to contribute to the disturbance of mental equilibrium in young adult females is the urbanization and technification of modern-day society (Benfield, Taff, Newman, & Smith, 2014; Berger & McLeod, 2006; Bratman, Daily, Levy, & Gross, 2015a; Bratman, Hamilton, Hahn, Daily, & Gross, 2015b; Chevalier et al., 2012; Ghaly & Teplitz, 2004; Keniger, Gaston, Irvine, & Fuller, 2013; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Nisbet, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011). According to Bratman et al. (2015a), over 50% of humanity currently resides in urban locales, further predicting this rate will surpass 70% by the year 2050. In addition, almost 1/3 of Canadian adults spend little to no time outdoors, allotting only 6% of their time outside of their urban confines (Nisbet, 2015). It would seem that there exists an association

between urbanized living and prevalence of mental disorders (Benfield et al., 2014; Bratman et al., 2015a; Bratman et al., 2015b; Logan & Selhub, 2012). Moreover, researchers have posited that the increase in psychological distress and dysfunction is partially caused by the decline in nature exposure, as evidenced by a ruptured connection between humanity and the natural world (e.g., Berger & McLeod, 2006; Bratman et al., 2015a; Bratman et al., 2015b; Chevalier et al., 2012; Keniger et al., 2013; Nisbet et al., 2011). As a result, the health, happiness, and wellbeing of humankind is compromised (Nisbet et al., 2011).

Over a century ago, renown biologist Sir John Arthur Thomson (1914) shed light on the indispensable healing power of nature through mindful engagement with its elements, a phenomenon he coined *vis medicatrix naturae*. He predicted that the relationship between humanity and nature "could not be ignored, could not be abandoned, without loss in the realm of positive mental health" (Logan & Selhub, 2012, p. 7). To explicate this, Ulrich's (1981) stress reduction theory posits that immersion in a nature-bound setting has restorative benefits for the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing of individuals (Bratman et al., 2015a). Specifically, by mindfully engaging with nature's elements, stress is reduced via activation of the parasympathetic nervous system, which abates autonomic physiological arousal typically manifested in the fight-flight-flee anxiety response (Bratman et al., 2015a; Brown & Gerbarg, 2005; Kjellgren, Bood, Axelsson, Norlander, & Saatcioglu, 2007; Lee, Park, Tsunetsugu, Kagawa, & Miyazaki, 2009). A number of recent empirical studies provide support for the stress reduction theory (e.g., Benfield et al., 2014; Bratman et al., 2015a; Keniger et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2009; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Marselle, Irvine, & Warber, 2014; Nisbet, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011; Shanahan et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2012; van den Berg et al., 2015; Wang, Rodiek, Wu, Chen, & Li, 2016). When engaging the visual sense (e.g., Bratman et al., 2015a; Lee et al., 2009; van den Berg et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016), the auditory sense (e.g., Benfield et al., 2014), the sense of touch (e.g., Chevalier, 2015; Chevalier et al., 2012; Ghaly & Teplitz, 2004), or some combination of the five senses (e.g., Hinds, 2011; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Marselle et al., 2014; Nisbet, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011; Shanahan et al., 2016) to connect with nature-bound environments, optimal health and wellbeing ensues through restoration and revitalization of the body, mind, and spirit. Similar results have been documented regarding mindful engagement with music (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Hallam, 2010; Juslin et al., 2008; Laiho, 2004;

Lamont, 2011; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Pitts, 2005; Schäfer et al., 2014; van Goethem & Sloboda, 2011).

Despite the growing number of studies examining the beneficial impact of immersion in experiences with nature and music on health and wellbeing, several researchers continue to argue a paucity of literature of this phenomenon in the individual research domains of nature (e.g., Benfield et al., 2014; Cervinka, Röderer, & Hefler, 2011; Howell et al., 2011; Lee et al., 2009; Marselle et al., 2014; Nisbet et al., 2011) and music (e.g., Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Hallam, 2010; Lamont, 2011; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Schäfer et al., 2014; van Goethem & Sloboda, 2011). In particular, it would appear that further examination of how mindful engagement with music in the music festival context positively contributes to attendee health and wellbeing is warranted (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Harrison, 2014; Maeng et al., 2016; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts & Spencer, 2008). Moreover, it would seem that investigation of how the natural setting positively affects festival-goer health and wellbeing at music festivals has been overlooked (O'Grady, 2015). This study therefore sought to explore how sensorial engagement with the elements of nature and music in the music festival setting yields therapeutic outcomes for the health and wellbeing of the female emerging adult cohort.

Summary of Findings and Current Research Literature

In order to examine how the elements of nature and music contribute to the maximization of emerging adult women's health and wellbeing at a Canadian outdoor music festival, Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi's (2000) conceptualization of positive psychology seemed the ideal theoretical approach in which to frame this study (Nisbet, 2015; Robertson, Hutton, & Brown, 2018). Fundamentally, positive psychology focuses on "understanding the factors that lead to mental health rather than mental illness - on cultivating strengths rather than eliminating weaknesses" (Neff, 2011, p. 255). Inspired by Maslow's (1954) scholarly work regarding human needs, self-actualization, and fulfillment, as well as Rogers' (1961) humanistic therapeutic modality that comprises individuals' personal growth and pursuit of elevated awareness, openness, and self-acceptance, this framework is concerned with how humans flourish and achieve an optimal state of authentic happiness and wellbeing (Filep et al., 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011). Within the positive psychology theoretical framework, the term *wellbeing* involves the thriving of hedonic and eudaimonic components; the hedonic element comprises

optimization of positive affect and mood, whereas the eudaimonic element involves fulfillment of self-realized purpose and attainment of a fruitfully meaningful and balanced life (Ascenso, Perkins, Atkins, Fancourt, & Williamon, 2018; Cervinka et al., 2011; Filep et al., 2015; Goulimaris, Mavridis, Genti, & Rokka, 2014; Nisbet et al., 2011). According to Seligman (2010; Seligman, 2011), the construct of *wellbeing* may be conceptualized as fulfillment of the dimensions of (a) positive emotion, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, and (e) accomplishment, collectively identified as the *PERMA* framework (Ascenso et al., 2018; Croom, 2015; Filep et al., 2015; Harrison, 2014). The *PERMA* framework (Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011) will therefore guide the presentation of this study's findings complimented with resonant existing literature.

From Jarring Cacophony to Harmonious Equanimity: A Transformative Journey of the Female Emerging Adult Self in Attending an Outdoor Music Festival

Prior to arriving at the 2018 *Ness Creek Music Festival*, all four female emerging adult study participants appeared to have experienced some degree of distress that compromised the state of their health and wellbeing. The young women attributed this elevated level of distress to various stressors, pressures, and expectations in their personal, professional and/or educational, and relational life domains. Moreover, one participant reported having been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, and another with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS). Based on these participant accounts, both of these chronic conditions seem to further exacerbate their level of distress in their everyday lives. As a result, the compounded stressors, pressures, and expectations these emerging adult women face on a daily basis appear to decrease their level of life quality and vitality. Furthermore, all reported feeling somewhat disconnected from their authentic selves, disengaged from their present-moment experiences. However, it would seem that the *Ness Creek Music Festival* experience countered such detrimental effects to their health and wellbeing. Specifically, the four female emerging adult participants synonymously reported experiencing restorative benefits that positively enhanced their health and wellbeing as a result of mindful immersion in and engagement with the elements of music and nature at this event.

Therapeutic Healing Among Music and Nature: Participant Experiences during Attendance

Optimization of positive emotion. Rooted in the hedonic perspective of human flourishing, positive emotion is characterized by indicators of positive affect or pleasure

(Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011). At *Ness Creek Music Festival*, it would seem that all study participants experienced notable moments of maximal pleasure and happiness. In particular, the young women identified the music at this event as a catalyst in inducing a positively-valenced emotional state throughout the duration of the music festival. This finding replicated results from several studies exploring outcomes of music festival attendance on psychological wellbeing (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Griffin et al., 2016; Laing & Mair, 2015; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011), in which the music experience was found to be a significant factor in enhancing positive emotion of attendees. Filep et al. (2015) propose that the maximization of hedonic affect at a music festival not only serves to temporarily elevate mental and emotional health and wellbeing at the event, but also results in long-term positive outcomes concerning one's personal growth. For instance, experiencing chronic positive emotion as a result of engagement with music at this event may incite festival-goers to savour life and perceive it more optimistically; to expand their understandings of the world; to instigate and nurture social relationships; and to explore, affirm, and express their authentic selves with assuredness (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Griffin et al., 2016; Little et al., 2018). In the present study, these outcomes were particularly pronounced for all four emerging adults while immersed and engaged in the musical performances at *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Moreover, Little et al. (2018) highlighted how the music experience at a music festival may contribute to the formation of positive episodic memories; as observed in participant accounts, it would appear that the young women believed they would refer to these previously-formed positive memories as a means to mitigate stress in their everyday lives following the end of the event.

Amid the natural surroundings of *Ness Creek Music Festival* in the rural northern Saskatchewan Boreal Forest, deemed "the cornerstone of the *Ness Creek* experience," the young women drew great pleasure from mindfully engaging and conversing with nature's elements (Ness Creek Music Festival, 2019). Whether observing dragonflies at play whilst wading in Ness Creek's waters, listening to the pitter-patter of rain on the roof of a tent, or feeling the electrifying vibrations of the Earth whilst walking barefoot, this study's participants reported being in a euphoric emotional state as a result of being immersed in nature. This therapeutic outcome echoes findings from numerous studies that posited an association with nature exposure and positive affect induction (e.g., Bratman et al., 2015a; Hinds, 2011; Marselle et al., 2014; Nisbet,

2015; Nisbet et al., 2011; O'Grady, 2015; Zelinski & Nisbet, 2014). For instance, O'Grady (2015) mentioned how being amid nature's elements in a festival setting prompts positive emotion, which in turn cultivates hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing constructs. In Hinds' (2011) study, the sense of *solitude and simplicity* of the natural environment elicited positive emotion. This uninhibited sense of utopian freedom in the outdoor setting was also highlighted in this study, particularly when the participants witnessed in-vivo natural wonders such as a rainbow, the moon and stars, and lightning that appeared to flash to the beat of The Dead South's musical performance. Studies by Bratman et al. (2015a) and Marselle et al. (2014) presented empirical evidence suggesting an increase in positive affect as a result of walking through a nature-bound environment. Marselle et al. (2014) even proposed that walking in nature can significantly mitigate perceived stress as a result of abated negative affect. Moreover, a study by Nisbet (2015) reported the results of the 2015 David Suzuki Foundation's 30x30 nature challenge in which Canadians committed to spending 30 minutes outdoors in nature for 30 days during the month of May. They found that the notable increase in positive emotion and vitality also further fostered a sense of awe, fascination, and curiosity in participants' everyday lives. Zelinski and Nisbet (2014) also identified prosocial aspirations and generosity as beneficial outcomes of a positively-valenced emotional state resulting from nature exposure. Thus, it would seem that immersion in a natural outdoor environment facilitates hedonic wellbeing, its restorative effect also contributing to a reduction in stress (Nisbet, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011). Ultimately, all participant accounts underscored the maximization of positive emotion in the *Ness Creek Music Festival* setting as a result of mindful engagement with the elements of music and nature.

Optimization of engagement. Part of the eudaimonic narrative, the process of engagement entails purposeful absorption in endeavours that promote psychological gratification and self-enhancement (Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011). Engagement predominantly fosters autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which are psychological needs deemed essential for optimal self-determination (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Filep et al., 2015; Howell et al., 2011). Much like the participants of this study had insinuated, American psychologist Tara Brach (2017) suggests that the seemingly ceaseless frenzy of day-to-day demands and stressors steers individuals to move through everyday life as if in a trance. Paulson, Davidson, Jha, and Kabat-Zinn (2013) echo this observation, outlining modern-day humanity's proclivity to be on autopilot mode; as a result, one is not attentive, aware, nor engaged in present-moment

experiences. As emphasized in this study's results, it would appear that the female emerging adult population may be particularly susceptible to this tendency as a result of exceeding pressures and expectations typically placed upon them. Brown & Ryan (2003) underscored the significance of mindful engagement in prompting vitality, joy, and a sense of purpose. Based on participant accounts, it would seem that attending *Ness Creek Music Festival* facilitated engaging experiences that significantly enhanced their health and wellbeing.

Study results confirmed that engagement was maximized during the musical performances at the Main Stage. By being fully immersed in the music experience, the young women felt authentically connected to other attendees in the crowd, as well as to the artists onstage. This not only increased their sense of belongingness in that moment, but also led them to perceive themselves as vital co-creators of the experience (Filep et al., 2015; Harrison, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Interestingly, the participants of this study identified the absence of cellular service in the remote music festival setting as facilitating an experienced sense of authentic connectedness with artists and with fellow attendees. Despite attendees being able to use their phones to videotape performances, "no one had their phone out," suggesting all attendees were invested in being mindfully engaged in the present moment. Interestingly, it would seem as though Jack White sought to replicate such beneficial outcomes for his spectators over the course of his 2018 *Boarding House Reach* Tour, during which he banned any and all cell phone use at each of his concerts (CBC News, 2018). By eliminating the distracting use of cell phones, the strengthening of positive social bonds is made possible, not only between artist and attendee, but also between festival-goers. Thus, whether singing along to a tune with the artist, dancing with pure abandon with the crowd, or being inspired by the vocalists and the musicians, it seems that active cognitive and emotional involvement in the live musical performances contributed to the participants' optimization of health and wellbeing (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Little et al., 2018). In particular, the connection between performer and audience (e.g., Harrison, 2014; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011), as well as the social connectedness experienced via vocal and movement synchronicity in the crowd (e.g., Little et al., 2018), prompts the unification of humankind through which one's sense of value, belonging, meaning, and purpose is optimized.

Intently listening and pondering upon an artist's vocalizations positively reinforced one of the participant's personal mores and values. For two others, watching the one female in a male-

dominated band play the banjo may have helped shatter previously experienced prejudices at their places of work regarding their gender, resulting in an elevated sense of empowerment and self-assuredness. Dancing amongst the stage crowd also appeared to have considerably decreased symptoms of anxiety for one participant, abating unhealthy worry-driven and self-conscious thought. Engagement in this activity also led another to question limiting notions of how a young woman ought to appropriately express herself through movement. This self-exploration through dance led her to newly affirm and freely express her authentic self, an experience that fostered a greater sense of self-understanding, self-acceptance, self-confidence, and self-determination. In a study about attendee experiences at a women-only music festival, Odahl-Ruan, McConnell, Shattell, and Kozlowski (2015) noted similar positive outcomes in their participants. Specifically, through fostering self-determination, the women felt newly empowered to be proactive, take risks, and be perseverant in perceivably discriminatory and gender-oppressed circumstances (Odahl-Ruan et al., 2015). The findings of this study regarding the therapeutic effects of dance in the music festival setting are also consistent with those from O'Grady (2015), who suggested that outdoor dance experiences "contribute not only to their immediate enjoyment of the event but to their personal sense of wellbeing, expressed predominantly as interconnectivity and liberation" (p. 93). Moreover, Goulmaris et al. (2014)'s study revealed that engaging in recreational dance activities resulted in a significant decrease in psychological stress measures and increase in positive wellbeing measures.

Participating in the Drum and Dance Circle also appeared to facilitate sensorial engagement that contributed to the maximization of emerging adult attendee health and wellbeing. Specifically, drumming involves mindful and intent engagement of one's physical and cognitive faculties, and may even elicit cathartic emotional responses that result in positive wellbeing outcomes. For one participant, the thought of drumming had initially led to feelings of nervousness and uneasiness. Cordially invited to contribute to the primordial rhythmic sounds and vibrations by a fellow drummer, this young woman hesitantly joined the Circle. Recounting this meaningful experience, she described how pushing through her self-conscious fears and engaging in the music-making led to an enhanced sense of wellbeing, during which a sense of accomplishment was nurtured. Similar findings were reported in group-intervention drumming studies by Ascenso et al. (2018) and Wood, Ivery, Donovan, and Lambin (2013). In their findings, subjective, social, and psychological wellbeing measures were maximized because of

anxiety and stress reduction, promotion of accomplishment, purpose, control, autonomy, as well as positive socialization and group cohesion.

According to Brown and Ryan (2003), mindful engagement in a personally meaningful activity appears to further foster interest in other novel experiences that may also yield therapeutic outcomes of health and wellbeing. Held back by her anxiety-related IBS diagnosis, one of the study participants had never before attempted camping. Despite her initial pronounced unease in not having access to modern plumbing in the nature-bound locale, she did not experience one IBS flare-up nor debilitating symptom of anxiety. Ready to embrace the novel flow experience of tenting, it would seem that the anxious-ridden thoughts related to her disorder were attenuated upon arrival. As a result of the positive camping experience at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, she expressed intent to soon camp once again, and to even try nature-related activities such as wakeboarding and boating for the first time. To explicate the alleviation of her anxiety-related IBS symptomology upon immersion in the Boreal Forest, current research posits that sensorial engagement with nature has immediate stress-reducing and physiological and psychological wellbeing-enhancing effects (e.g., Benfield et al., 2014; Howell et al., 2011; Nisbet, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011; Passmore & Howell, 2014; Zelinski & Nisbet, 2014). Specifically, beneficial outcomes of mindful contact with nature on one's wellbeing include (a) maximization of positive affect (e.g., Howell et al., 2011; Nisbet, 2015; Nisbet et al., 2011; Passmore & Howell, 2014; Zelinski & Nisbet, 2014); (b) development of eudaimonic components of autonomy, personal growth, and purpose in life (e.g., Howell et al., 2011; Nisbet et al., 2011); (c) vitality (e.g., Nisbet et al., 2011; Passmore & Howell, 2014); (d) mood improvement and attention restoration (e.g., Benfield et al., 2014); and (e) increased life satisfaction and meaning (e.g., Passmore & Howell, 2014). These health-enhancing effects are thought to be attributed to the concept of nature connectedness, also known as nature relatedness, which Nisbet et al. (2011) defines as "the affective, cognitive, and experiential relationship individuals have with the natural world or a subjective sense of connectedness with nature" (p. 304). Moreover, due to the innately entrenched role nature played in the evolution of humankind, Wilson's (1984) biophilia hypothesis proposes that optimal flourishing, wellbeing, and fulfilment cannot be achieved without nurturing one's bond with its elements (Howell et al., 2011; Howell, Passmore, & Buro, 2013; Kabat-Zinn 2012; Nisbet et al., 2011; Roe & Aspinall, 2011; Zelinski & Nisbet, 2014).

All participants of this study identified nature connectedness as meaningful to maximization of their health and wellbeing. It would appear that curative outcomes were particularly pronounced when the young women were mindfully attuned to nature's elements. When one is sensorially engaged in exploration of nature's wonders, one's physical, mental, and emotional stressors are reduced, thus allowing for therapeutic restoration and self-regulation of these young women's overburdened physiological and cognitive faculties (Chevalier, 2015; Chevalier et al., 2012; Ghaly & Teplitz, 2004; Hinds, 2011; Howell et al., 2011; Howell et al., 2013; Logan & Selhub, 2012; O'Grady, 2015). In the music festival setting, it would seem that this is achieved through engagement in the process of mindfulness, that is, non-judgmentally attending to the present moment with affectionate, compassionate, and openhearted interest (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). All female adults participants appeared to concur that much like music, the natural surroundings at *Ness Creek Music Festival* were bereft of judgment and expectation. Rather, through metaphorical conversation, the elements of nature existentially awakened, enriched, inspired, clarified, soothed, motivated, and comforted these young women.

Optimization of positive relationships. Social wellbeing yielded from positive relationships are exemplified in Keyes' (1998) pillars of *social contribution, integration, actualization, acceptance, and coherence*. Results of the present study confirmed previous findings that social wellbeing may be optimized at a music festival (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Cummings, 2007; Filep et al., 2015; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Laing & Mair, 2015; Little et al., 2018; McConnell, Todd, Odahl-Ruan, & Shattell, 2016; Odahl-Ruan et al., 2015; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts & Spencer, 2008; Robertson et al., 2018; Snell, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2017; Wilks, 2011).

The young female participants emphasized how the music and nature experiences at *Ness Creek Music Festival* helped nurture previously-formed relationships, as well as prompt the development of new relationships and promote a sense of *communitas*. First coined by Turner (1969), *communitas* is a term that depicts the spontaneous unification of unfamiliar persons at a festival event, during which social inequalities are removed and a sense of social belonging and connectedness is amplified (Little et al., 2018). The formation of *communitas*, deemed a distinctive therapeutic element of the *Ness Creek Music Festival* experience by all accounts, facilitated a non-judgmental, accepting, supportive, and altruistic environment in which the female emerging adults felt safe to explore, affirm, and express themselves. Moreover,

separating oneself from the everyday life city setting, an individualistic-driven environment in which the female participants reported typically feeling judged and sized up, was deemed particularly salient in the enhancement of their health and wellbeing. This may be attributed to the harmonious sense of *communitas* in the music festival setting, one perceivably devoid of socially conceived expectations and constraints that may induce unhealthy self-conscious thought and compromise stress levels. This study further validated other findings concerning wellbeing benefits from being immersed in a music festival *communitas* (e.g., Alonso-Vazquez, Packer, Fairley, & Hughes, 2019; Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Kruger & Saayman, 2017; Little et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts & Spencer, 2008).

As observed in studies by Croom (2015), Laiho (2004), and Lippman & Greenwood (2012), the element of music may play a significant role in the fostering of pro-social behaviours. In the music festival setting, music gathers the attendees together, which supports intrinsic human needs of social cohesion and belongingness (Maslow, 1954). Whether chanting, singing, and clapping in sync with other crowd members at the festival stages, or partaking in the Drum and Dance Circle, the element of music at *Ness Creek Music Festival* appeared to have greatly contributed to the nurturing of positive relationships among all study participants, thus maximizing dimensions of their social health and wellbeing.

In conjunction with music, the natural surroundings of *Ness Creek Music Festival* appeared to have also facilitated enhancement of *social contribution, integration, actualization, acceptance, and coherence*. According to O'Grady (2015), attendee therapeutic outcomes yielded at a music festival can be attributed to the mutually respectful interrelation between music, festival-goers, and nature. Synonymous with participant accounts of this study, Hinds (2011) identified *sociability* as a therapeutic outcome of a shared nature-immersion experience. Specifically, he highlighted how group cohesiveness and autonomy resulted in an increased acceptance of others and of the Earth, which also extended to an increased level of self-confidence and acceptance of self (Hinds, 2011). Ultimately, it would appear that mindful engagement with nature's elements not only served to strengthen the *Ness Creek Music Festival communitas* bond, but also facilitated an enhanced sense of belongingness to the universe. Hence, as a result of nature connectedness in the music festival setting, all participants recalled a

particular moment during which they had unearthed an increased sense of purpose and meaning in their lives.

Optimization of meaning. One of the central tenets of the emerging adult developmental stage is the ongoing quest for self-clarity (Arnett, 2000). Meaning is constructed when an individual pursues, cultivates, and constitutes authentic expressions of his identity (Croom, 2015; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Howell et al., 2013; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). It would appear that the music festival setting facilitates attendees' search for meaning (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Kiguli, 2013; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). This finding, also found in the present study, seemed to positively enhance their sense of purpose, self-acceptance, and sense of belonging.

Temporally and liminally separating oneself from the everyday life stressors, pressures, and expectations, the music festival setting was depicted as a safe and liberating escape during which the young women felt free to exercise their sense of meaning. This "separation experience" (Packer & Ballantyne, 2011) or "festivalscape" (Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018) aspect of the event is echoed in other studies exploring attendee psychological wellbeing at music festivals (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). In particular, Little et al. (2018) identified the themes of *psychological escape*, *societal escape*, and *physical escape* as salient therapeutic factors that influence positive health and wellbeing at a music festival. All three were emphasized in this study's findings. *Psychological escape* comprises separating oneself from one's ruminative worries and stressors, thereby providing the mental relief and space required to explore one's self-concept; *societal escape* regards putting aside social norms and expectations so as to freely reflect upon who one authentically is; and *physical escape* involves leaving behind the urban setting and immersing oneself in a natural one (Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015). The latter theme, which embodies the novel focus of the present study, was found to significantly promote health and wellbeing for all four young women at *Ness Creek Music Festival*.

Studies exploring positive outcomes of health and wellbeing from ongoing immersion in nature suggest that exploration of its stable and permanent constituents prompts existential ponderings of one's purpose in the world (e.g., Howell et al., 2013; Passmore & Howell, 2014). While connecting with nature, one's sense of meaning may be clarified, which then boosts other dimensions of health and wellbeing (Howell et al., 2013). In a study by Passmore and Howell

(2014), meaning, along with other components of hedonic and eudaimonic wellbeing, were optimized because of a 2-week nature immersion period. Hinds (2011) also emphasized how continual immersion in nature, a construct that does not threaten, judge, nor discriminate, can facilitate openness to self-discovery of one's authentic self and meaning in life. Engagement with nature in a music festival setting may also promote a sense of belonging and restore one's positive outlook regarding humanity, as observed in studies by Filep et al. (2015) and Little et al. (2018). Such positive outcomes that nurture music festival attendees' sense of meaning are also prompted by engagement with music (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Groarke & Hogan, 2015; Little et al., 2018; Odahl-Ruan et al., 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). As noted in Schäfer et al.'s (2014) study on intense musical experiences, participants were inspired to restore their sense of meaning, to reaffirm how they fit into the scheme of humanity, and to experience mentally and emotionally equilibrated lives. Groarke and Hogan (2015) validated this finding in the music festival setting realm. They described how full absorption in the music experience yields transcendent outcomes that facilitate meaning-making exploration. As a result of engaging with the elements of music and nature, all participants in this study appeared to have nurtured their sense of meaning at *Ness Creek Music Festival*. This was emphasized in their professed re-evaluation of personal values, reaffirmed sense of belonging in the world, and revitalized spiritual quest of purpose.

Optimization of accomplishment. Much like the engagement dimension of Seligman's (2011) *PERMA* framework, one's perceived sense of accomplishment involves the nurturing of self-determination via cultivation of the psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Croom, 2015; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Laiho, 2004). Armed with an optimal sense of accomplishment, one is more resilient in the face of stressors that may compromise her physical, mental, and emotional health (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Croom, 2015; Laiho, 2004). Accomplishment is particularly salient for the wellbeing of the emerging adult population (Laiho, 2004). Based on this study's data, as well as recent concurrent findings in the literature, it would appear that immersion in the elements of music and nature in the music festival setting facilitates an increase in accomplishment for its attendees.

A study by Croom (2015) highlighted how participation in musical experiences are associated with increased levels of perceived success, competence, self-esteem, pride, happiness, life satisfaction, and optimism for the future. Laiho (2004) also outlined how one's sense of

agency was nurtured via music engagement experiences that participants deemed psychologically meaningful. Such outcomes were observed in this study's participant accounts. In particular, immersion in the music experience at *Ness Creek Music Festival* appeared to have led to an increased level of self-understanding, self-compassion, and self-confidence, inspiring the young women to accomplish set future goals of mastery. This enhanced sense of self-determination in the music festival setting was also found in studies examining maximization of health and wellbeing at this event as a result of mindful engagement with the music experience (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Little et al., 2018; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

Findings exploring the catalyzing relationship between nature connectedness and accomplishment development support those yielded in this study. Namely, a nature-bound environment instils a sense of euphoric liberation; once this restorative process commences, one senses a cathartic release, thereby making room in one's mental and emotional reserves required for self-actualization processes to occur (Hinds, 2011; Maslow, 1954). It is through self-actualization that one achieves one's highest potential, or one's maximal of achievement (Hinds, 2011). The psychological removal of everyday life stressors, pressures, and expectations in a natural environment therefore allows for the replenishing of resilience, an outcome that effectively safeguards one from unhealthy physical, mental, and emotional symptomology (e.g., Berman, Jonides, & Kaplan, 2008; Beyer et al., 2014; Bratman et al., 2015b; Kuo & Taylor, 2004; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Marselle et al., 2014; Nisbet et al., 2011; Shanahan et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2012; van den Berg et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016; Zelinski & Nisbet, 2014). Such curative outcomes were found in the results of this study. Specifically, Kyer's anxiety-related symptoms of IBS were attenuated upon arrival at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, citing the novel experience of immersing oneself in nature as a contributor to her optimal wellbeing at the event. Maria claimed to have struggled with ruminative- and worry-based symptoms of anxiety prior to attendance, and it would seem that they were minimized at *Ness Creek Music Festival* as a result of sensorial engagement with nature. Olivia's psychological symptoms of her bipolar disorder diagnosis appeared to have been significantly alleviated in the music festival setting. Sarah's stress-induced mental state upon attendance seemed to have been restored, replenished, and revitalized due to mindful moments of external focus on nature's elements. Thus, as a result of the reduction of mental and emotional symptoms of psychosomatic and psychological distress at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, these young women fostered their increased sense of

accomplishment. Such findings are replicated in studies exploring successful outcomes of exposure to nature in decreasing stress (e.g., Beyer et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2009; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Marselle et al., 2014; Nisbet et al., 2011; Thompson et al., 2012; van den Berg et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2016), anxiety symptomology (e.g., Beyer et al., 2014; Bratman et al., 2015b; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Nisbet et al., 2011; Zelinski & Nisbet, 2014), and symptoms of depression (e.g., Beyer et al., 2014, Marselle et al., 2014; Shanahan et al., 2016).

Although never directly crediting the natural setting of the music festival as a healing element to attendee health and wellbeing, studies on the therapeutic effects yielded at a music festival validate the increase in accomplishment among festival-goers via restoration of physical, mental, and emotional balance (e.g., Alonso-Vazquez et al., 2019; Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Studies on mindful engagement with present-moment stimuli suggest that positive outcomes on one's health and wellbeing are yielded due to the prompting of certain mental processes that facilitate a decrease in psychological distress (e.g., Arch & Craske, 2006; Keng et al., 2011; Khoury et al., 2015; Kjellgren et al., 2007; Robins, Keng, Ekblad, & Brantley, 2012; Sharma & Rush, 2014; Virgili, 2015; Vøllestad, Sivertsen, & Nielsen, 2011). Such processes include metacognitive awareness and re-perception via diffusion of overwhelmed and overworked cognitive faculties, resulting in clarification of values, self-acceptance, self-compassion, behavioural and emotional regulation, and attentional control (Keng et al., 2011).

Another health-enhancing outcome that appears to foster attendee accomplishment in the natural environment of the music festival setting is the promotion of environmentally responsible behaviours (Alonso-Vazquez et al., 2019). This finding is supported in other studies examining the connection between nature relatedness and development of a mindful ecological self (e.g., Berger & McLeod, 2006; Cervinka et al., 2011; Hinds, 2011; Logan & Selhub, 2012; Nesbit, 2015; Nesbit et al., 2011; Zelenski, Dopko, & Capaldi, 2015). Such studies affirm that an enhanced feeling of nature connectedness prompts the development of stronger ecological identities that foster conservational and pro-environmental attitudes. All participant accounts in this study highlighted an increase in biospheric concern and care as a result of *Ness Creek Music Festival* taking place in Saskatchewan's Boreal Forest. As a result, they all claimed to have behaved in an environmentally responsible manner, which thereby led them to experience an enhanced sense of accomplishment. As Nisbet et al. (2011) emphasizes, acting in an

environmental fashion "produc[es] a positive feedback loop whereby nature-protective behaviour becomes reinforcing for the good feelings and personal wellbeing it produces" (p. 319).

At *Ness Creek Music Festival*, engaging with the curative aspects of nature and music appeared to have fostered personal growth of authentic self for all emerging adult women participants. Filep et al.'s (2015) study on how festival-goers yield psychological gains from event attendance proposed that "liminal event experiences, even when characterized by challenges, often create positive emotional outcomes such as feelings of control, mastery, and competence" (p. 501). Whether overcoming trepidations of camping for the first time in a setting devoid of modern plumbing, participating in the Drum and Dance Circle, or coping with the end of an abusive romantic relationship, the young women of this study cultivated an increased sense of control, mastery, and competence because of attending *Ness Creek Music Festival*. Such findings were also echoed in Little et al.'s (2018) report on the lived experiences of individuals who attended a multi-day electronic dance music (EDM) festival. The music festival experience was perceived as a peak experience, that is, one of profound significance and of salient depth of feelings that fostered meaningful self-actualization needs (Maslow, 1962).

Finally, it has been reported that the music festival setting prompts agency by means of increased self-acceptance and self-confidence of marginalized individuals (Odahl-Ruan et al., 2015; McConnell et al., 2016). Reconnecting with one's truest self is thought to assist in the optimization of personal health and wellbeing. In a podcast narrated by Brach (2017), she emphasizes how in today's society, we have the tendency to "abandon our true self, surrendering to who we think we should be. [...] If we spend our whole life trying to be a certain way, but not an authentic expression of self, we will spend our whole life judging ourselves in some way for not being enough." In particular, one of the study participants felt she could fully express herself as a woman in the *Ness Creek Music Festival* setting: "I can come out here, I can put my short shorts on, I can get my bathing suit on, you know, I can just / actually / feel like a woman." This freeing experience contrasts that of her male-dominated profession, for which she wears a uniform meant to solely fit a male body:

And / my / uniform that I have to wear / is, / uh, because, obviously, it's a man's profession, they don't have women's sizes. So to get the right length, it's - or, to get - I have curves, and a guy doesn't have curves, so to get the right pants, they end up being

baggy so they fit me. So I look, you know, I - I just, I look like a total dude ... I hate - you know, I like - every woman / likes to feel pretty.

While clothed in her gender discriminative uniform, this participant's gender identity appears suppressed, extinguishing her sense of "feel[ing] pretty". When persistently repressing the expression and fulfillment of authentic parts of oneself, cognitive dissonance is bound to materialize, a psychologically compromised state that is bound to render her mentally and emotionally unbalanced. Thus, it would seem that the figurative and literal boundlessness of the music festival setting facilitates liberated expression of one's authentic gender-identified self. According to recent literature, it would appear that immersing oneself in nature facilitates this psychologically restorative process (e.g., Cervinka et al., 2011; Hinds, 2011; Kabat-Zinn, 2015). According to Hinds (2011), the more societally and professionally constrained sense of self is discarded, letting one's true desires and aspirations emerge in one's consciousness. This experiential outcome was observed in all participant accounts. Specifically, their social and professional masks (or "baggy" uniforms) were set aside, allowing for exploration, affirmation, and expression of their truest self.

Summary. With support from existing literature, it would appear that mindful engagement with the elements of music and nature in the music festival setting fosters optimization of the health and wellbeing of female emerging adult attendees. Specifically, the five pillars of Seligman's (2011) positive psychology *PERMA* framework (i.e., positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment) are all enhanced as a result of therapeutic music relatedness and nature connectedness outcomes.

Strengths of the Study

With the intention of furthering knowledge of the therapeutic experience and meaning of music and nature in a music festival setting, this study has numerous points of strength. Firstly, this research provided innovative insight into how engagement with and immersion in nature at a music festival situated in the heart of the Canadian Boreal Forest yielded beneficial outcomes for attendee health and wellbeing. Although there exists literature investigating other restorative factors of the outdoor music festival experience, it would seem that this study is the first of its kind to have explored the element of nature at this event. Previously explored subjects include (a) music (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Kruger & Saayman, 2017; Little et al., 2018; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts & Spencer,

2008; Snell, 2005), (b) development and affirmation of personal identity (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Little et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; Odahl-Ruan et al., 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011), (c) development and affirmation of cultural identity via formation of *communitas* (e.g., Alonso-Vazquez, 2019; Avenburg, 2012; Ballantyne et al., 2014; Balzer, 1950; Filep et al., 2015; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Kruger & Saayman, 2017; Little et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts & Spencer, 2008), (d) social inclusion (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Cummings, 2007; Filep et al., 2015; Karlsen, 2009; Karlsen & Brändström, 2008; Laing & Mair, 2015; Li & Wood, 2016; Little et al., 2018; McConnell et al., 2016; Odahl-Ruan et al., 2015; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts & Spencer, 2008; Robertson et al., 2018; Snell, 2005; Szmigin et al., 2017; Wilks, 2011), (e) escape from everyday life (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Griffin et al., 2016; Li & Wood, 2016; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011; Pitts, 2005), and (f) injury and illness prevention and management (e.g., Bachman, Norman, Backman, & Hopkins, 2017; Hutton, Ranse, Verdonk, Ullah, & Arbon, 2014; Robertson et al., 2018). In choosing to also examine the curative effects of music in the outdoor music festival context, the present study supports and further contributes to previously reported findings concerning its positive impact on attendee health and wellbeing. Moreover, this research answered the call from several empirical studies stressing a shortage in literature regarding the psychologically beneficial impact of outdoor music festival attendance (e.g., Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Filep et al., 2015; Harrison, 2014; Little et al., 2018; Maeng et al., 2016; O'Grady, 2015; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). The majority of studies have mainly focused on the economic impact and commercial implications of outdoor music festivals (Karlsen, 2009; Kruger & Saayman, 2017; Maeng et al., 2016; Pegg & Patterson, 2010).

In order to conduct an in-depth investigation of optimal quality for this novel area of inquiry, Smith's (1996) Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) research methodology was employed, a valuable approach for exploring personal and social phenomena seldom been explored in psychological academic literature (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Additionally, in choosing the IPA methodology, thorough engagement and interpretation of each of the participants' perceptions of the phenomenon was achieved via satiation of the idiographic analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Wagstaff et al., 2014). This was of particular importance in studying the lived experience and meaning of the female emerging adult population, whose desires, motivations,

and experiences for attending and participating in outdoor music festivals are underrepresented in academic literature (Hutton et al., 2014; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Thus, in giving voice to these young women's experiences, this study succeeded in providing a formerly untapped perspective of how mindful connection with the elements of music and nature in the music festival setting serves to maximize their health and wellbeing. Not only do these findings highlight how emerging adult women may also benefit from engagement with music and nature outside of the music festival context, but they also serve to further inform mental health professionals and educators, as well as outdoor music festival design and management teams, about their influential impact to positively enhance personal health and wellbeing.

Another noteworthy strength of this study involves the novel spatial and temporal dimensions in which data collection occurred. In the interest of yielding data on attendee health and wellbeing in the music festival setting of a qualitative nature, it would appear that this study pioneered the conduct of interviews on-site during present-moment music festival proceedings, in contrast with yielding such data from interviews of a retrospective nature. According to Hinds (2011), "It seems that a combination of experience and semi-structured discussion of that experience within the very environment in which those experiences were conceived might be ideal for forming optimal understandings of that experience" (p. 203). Therefore, conducting semi-structured interviews while both interviewee and interviewer were physically and mentally engrossed in the nature-bound setting of the music festival itself served to maximize the ecological validity of this study. By being tangibly connected to the elements of music and nature throughout the interview process, participants were able to offer authentic accounts of their lived experience and meaning drawn from engaging with their therapeutic features. Moreover, by conducting the research on-site, the potential for false recall of lived experience and meaning was minimized, thereby increasing the validity of this study's findings.

On-site data collection facilitated the yielding of rich and vivid data, illustrating present-moment connections with natural and musical elements of the music festival experience that the participants deemed meaningful for maximization of their health and wellbeing. Indeed, while conversing about how mindful engagement with nature and music positively benefits them, its curative effects appeared to have actualized within all participants. For instance, while describing her experience at The Dead South's musical performance from the night prior, Sarah recalled "the endless silhouette of the trees" framing the Main Stage while the sky was "shooting

lightning". In recounting this moment, it would seem that the boundlessly "endless" freedom she felt the previous night had carried over into the interview process, instinctively influencing her to participate in the study with a synonymous sense of freedom, and thus maximizing the breadth and depth of her shared lived experience. A similar therapeutic outcome was observed throughout Kyer's interview, during which she appeared utterly relaxed, much like she shared having experienced the night prior whilst lying in her tent listening to the sounds of the rain. During the data collection process with Olivia and Maria, woodland creatures unexpectedly approached the interview site. It would seem that the interviewer-interviewee alliance was strengthened through genuine connection and bonding with the Boreal Forest creatures. This appears to have facilitated a sense of comfort, thwarting potential interview jitters for both interviewee and interviewer, as well as inciting heightened reflexive and contemplative states of pondering and expression. Moreover, it resulted in "negotiating the intricate power-play where research expert may meet experiential expert" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 180). Hence, in conducting these interviews in the heart of nature's curative elements, all participants appeared maximally at ease in sharing the authentic, intimate heart of their lived experience in the music festival setting.

Assessment of study validity was conducted using Yardley's (2000) IPA methodology quality dimensions (Shinebourne, 2011; Smith et al., 2009; Yardley, 2017). The choice to carry out participant recruitment and data collection on-site in the music festival setting was made in the interest of maximizing Yardley's (2000) first validity principle, *sensitivity to context*. The socio-cultural milieu of the phenomenon of interest was honoured, and data encompassing participants' life-worlds in experiencing and drawing meaning from engaging with the elements of music and nature at *Ness Creek Music Festival* were optimally expressed as a result. This was similarly observed in Hinds' (2011) IPA study, which involved data collection on the Scottish Isle of Hoy, the remote setting of a 10-day wilderness trip:

The simplicity and aesthetic appeal of the environment, in conjunction with being away from the all-pervasive hum of modern living, seem[ed] to facilitate, for some participants, an uncomplicated state of mind allowing varying degrees of freedom of thought and self-expressiveness (p. 201).

Moreover, during the interview process, I was dedicated to show empathic sensitivity and understanding so as to put the participants at ease. To accomplish this, I employed Ivey et al.'s (2016) therapeutic microskills of communication (e.g., attending and observation skills [i.e.,

exemplifying culturally and individually appropriate body language, vocal quality, verbal tracking]; encouraging, paraphrasing, and summarizing; observing and reflecting feelings; reflecting meaning and interpretation) when appropriate. The semi-structured nature of the interview process also facilitated conversational latitude and freedom, which appeared to have produced rich contextual data (Clarke, 2009; Smith & Osborn, 2009). Furthermore, *sensitivity to context* was optimized during the analysis phase of the present study. Determined to make sound analytic claims of how the participant made sense of their music festival experience, I attentively and empathically immersed myself in the raw data daily for a period of six months. Providing many verbatim excerpts in this manuscript further allows the reader to interpret the findings with maximum *sensitivity to context*, thereby validly contributing to the hermeneutic circle of analysis.

All phases of this study were completed with researcher *commitment and rigour*, therefore fulfilling the second of Yardley's (2000) quality dimensions of IPA research. In particular, rigorous satiation of raw material was achieved during the interview process, and a thorough and systematically grounded analysis of the collected data was accomplished through idiographic engagement and dedication. In addition, conducting the interviews near the end of the music festival proceedings ensured optimization of the authentic quality of experiential responses in relation to the phenomenon of interest (Hinds, 2011). Through all stages of the research project, I was *committed and rigorous* in my persistent attempt to reflexively bracket any implicitly biased preconceptions and assumptions that may compromise the objective interpretation of the findings (Ahern, 1999; Finlay, 2008; Hinds, 2011; Roberts, 2013). Hence, through unrelenting conscientiousness of reflexive bracketing, validity of data collection, interpretation, and presentation was maximized.

Thirdly, I aspired to ensure *transparency and coherence* of this study's findings. To optimize validity of this criterion, Yin's (1989) independent audit strategy was implemented, through which quality of the study was meticulously monitored by the faculty supervisor. This was achieved via rigorous examination of the research audit trail, including initial ponderings of the research project, the research proposal, the interview schedule, recorded audiotapes of the interviews, annotated transcripts, tables of themes, and draft versions of the final report (Smith et al., 2009). An independent inspection of the audit trail therefore ensured that the final version of this manuscript be *transparent and coherent* for the prospective reader, facilitating the capacity

to comprehend all stages of the research process and to ascertain how each developed from the original research question. Additionally, to further maximize methodological *transparency and coherence*, the commitment and sensibility to the phenomenological and hermeneutic maxims of the IPA research approach were emphasized throughout the manuscript.

The last of Yardley's (2000) four systematic principles of IPA study trustworthiness comprises *impact and importance*. Indeed, it would seem that this study succeeded in furthering the epistemological underpinnings of achieving health and wellbeing through immersion in the music festival setting and engagement with its curative elements. Such findings have notable implications for the enhancement of physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing of the female emerging adult population in their everyday lives. Moreover, mental health professionals and educators, as well as outdoor music festival design and management teams, can be further informed about how they may utilize the therapeutic outcomes yielded from immersion in music and nature to positively impact those whom they serve.

Limitations of the Study

Like any research endeavour, this study has limitations. From a methodological standpoint, the use of a qualitative research design restricts the ability to draw definitive conclusions about causal relationships. By choosing to employ a qualitative methodology to examine the phenomenon of interest, I was not able to wield experimental control to isolate the variables of music and nature from all other potentially therapeutic factors in the music festival setting. With the inability to fully isolate the origin of resulting beneficial outcomes to attendee health and wellbeing, it is not possible to determine to what degree the components of music and nature contribute to therapeutic wellness, as compared to other yielded music festival elements deemed significant by the participants of this study. Nevertheless, as the purpose of this project was to deepen understanding about a novel phenomenon of interest within the music festival experience, employment of a qualitative approach seemed the ideal choice.

Results from this study may not be generalizable to other Canadian outdoor music festivals. Although they share common characteristics (e.g., lasting several days and nights with round-the-clock music performances; offering stimulating educational music workshops; taking place in picturesque, open-air settings surrounded by nature, usually distantly removed from festival attendees' urban abodes; and enhancing the connection between performer and festival attendee due to proximal stage access), it was found that factors such as (a) the type of natural

setting in which the music festival takes place, (b) festival-goers' motivations to attend, and (c) attendee behaviours and treatment of other individuals and the environment may differ. Without specific prompting, all four study participants coincidentally alluded to this limitation by comparing *Ness Creek Music Festival* to another Canadian summer music festival that met all aforementioned criteria. According to the participants, this music festival, which takes place in a "big empty field", appears to attract individuals whose purpose and intentions of attendance differ from *Ness Creek Music Festival* attendees. Upon reflection of her experience at this other music festival, Sarah shared in a rather disheartened tone and laboured rate of speech:

So it was just a lot of, / people that are completely / drunk? Like, belligerently drunk? And / a lot of / garbage? ... There's just garbage everywhere, and people don't / care / about it? They just throw shit out their window, and they pull off with their trailer at the end of the weekend and then just leave a pile of garbage... And they leave their coolers and their lawn chairs, and it's just a big / mess? And, / people are constantly getting arrested, and charged, and drinking and driving ... So I see these things happening and ... I don't know what makes people act like that! ... Whereas somewhere like *Ness* that stuff would never fly.

Thus, contrary to the findings yielded at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, this other Canadian music festival appears to care little for the natural environment in which they are situated, as well as for their own and fellow attendees' health and safety. Furthermore, participants described it as a space rampant with judgment and devoid of respect. This alleged account contradicts the perceived non-judgmental, accepting, and mutually respectful atmosphere toward self, other attendees, and the natural Boreal Forest setting at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, a precursor that supports the maximization of therapeutic benefit for attendee health and wellbeing. Thus, not all Canadian outdoor music festivals can be assumed similar in nature. Despite the limited generalizability of results to other Canadian outdoor music festivals, music festival design and management committees may utilize this study's findings to positively influence the instillation of policies and services that serve to enhance attendee health and wellbeing.

Due to the set parameters of inclusion criteria for participants, the results of this study may not be generalizable outside of the female emerging adult population. Purposively recruiting members of this homogeneous group meant that perspectives of the male population, as well as those from other age cohorts, were not considered. Nonetheless, this allowed for in-depth

exploration of perceptions that have been historically marginalized in society and disregarded in academic literature (Hutton et al., 2014; Tkaczynski & Rundle-Thiele, 2013). Moreover, cultural or socioeconomic discrepancies were not examined. However, it was thought that these variables would bear little weight in significance, as it was assumed all emerging adult women generally aspire to be optimally healthy and well, regardless of culture and socioeconomic status.

Another limitation unearthed during the data collection phase of this study was the inability to guarantee complete participant privacy and anonymity. Despite the interviews taking place in a secluded area in the Boreal Forest out of direct attendee earshot, it was imperative that interviewee and interviewer not be too far removed from the scene in the interest of maximizing both individuals' sense of safety. By conducting the interviews on-site during the music festival's proceedings, some attendees saw interviewee and interviewer and approached them to share greetings, not knowing that an interview was taking place. It is important to note that the attendees were immediately informed of the interview in progress, and respectfully left the scene without more ado. Nevertheless, this may have rendered both interviewee and interviewer to be momentarily distracted, potentially derailing their train of thought and conversational flow. It may have also compromised the participant's level of comfort, affecting the depth of vulnerability in sharing their experience. Fortunately, this did not seem to be the case for any of the participants in this study. However, it warrants mention here, particularly for future research projects that may collect data on-site in a similar fashion.

It would be negligent not to mention that the sobriety of participants during the interview process could not be ultimately guaranteed. However, I was committed to behave in the utmost ethical manner throughout the participant recruitment and data collection processes; only those able to engage in a focused coherent conversation were deemed eligible for provision of consent and for participation in the study, and participant competency to consent and to participate was continually monitored and evaluated. As all interviews were carried out near the end of the music festival to maximize participant experience and meaning-making of the event, fatigue may have affected the quality of interview responses. Moreover, self-presentation bias, task demand characteristics, and social desirability were additional limitations of concern that may have thwarted participants from being fully engaged in the interview process, preventing them from fully immersing themselves into their own psychological life-world. However, it is thought that these potentially limiting facets characteristic of a qualitative methodological approach may be

considerably abated in an ecologically valid setting denuded of societal pressures concerning presentation of self (Hinds, 2011; Juslin et al., 2008).

Finally, it is important to note that the Canadian outdoor music festival experience is not perceived as uniformly beneficial at all times. One participant's transcript was excluded from analysis for this reason, in that she did not fully meet the selection criterion concerning her perception that the music festival experience was wholly beneficial to her health and wellbeing. Nonetheless, this participant underscored the potential import of considering perceptions of attendees who do not necessarily regard the music festival experience as enjoyable, rewarding, and valuable in enhancing their health and wellbeing, a converse perspective worth exploring in future research. Additionally, as noted in Pitts (2005), there is the potential for "bereavement" and "withdrawal" effects following the end of the music festival, factors that may have compromised the maximization of attendee health and wellbeing that had been achieved during the event's duration. Conversely, examination of potentially positive carry-over effects after the music festival has ended did not transpire. Although exploration of post-music festival attendee health and wellbeing was outside of the research scope of this study, it warrants further investigation (Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Robertson et al., 2018).

Considerations for Future Research

This study served to further emergent research on the remedial impact of the music festival experience on attendee health and wellbeing, a topic that appears to have considerable implications for bio-psycho-social-spiritual modalities of healing (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Blešić et al., 2014; Harrison, 2014; Maeng et al., 2016; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011). Since the purpose of this research was to examine the therapeutic elements and outcomes of a phenomenon seldom explored in academic literature, this study was exploratory in nature. As a result, a number of considerations for the honing of future research proposals surfaced.

As noted in the Limitations of the Study section of this chapter, it was found that not all Canadian outdoor music festivals yield the same therapeutic outcomes. As such, future research would benefit from exploring how and why attendee behaviours and treatment of other individuals and the environment may vary from one Canadian outdoor music festival to the next. How did *Ness Creek Music Festival* come to garner a reputation distinguished by its supportive, accepting, and non-judgmental *communitas* and its eco-friendly mores, whereas another Canadian outdoor music festival might be conversely known for disrespect and carelessness

toward self, others, and the environment? Moreover, what might prompt individuals from behaving in a constructive versus destructive manner in the music festival setting? Such research ponderings might perhaps be examined through the original lens of imitation theory in social psychology (e.g., Ellwood, 1901), as it would seem that the music festival setting is an isolated event in which individuals appear to conform their behaviour to emulate others'. Chartrand and Bargh (1999) have coined this social phenomenon the *chameleon effect*, which underscores a living being's tendency to non-consciously mimic behavioural mannerisms of another living being via direct interaction. These researchers explicate this phenomenon in correspondence with the *perception-behaviour link*, positing that the non-conscious act of perceiving another's behaviour in a social environment enhances the likelihood of following suit and engaging in that very same behaviour (Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996). Thus, it is possible that the power of imitation supersedes autonomous behavioural inclinations in the music festival locale. As observed in the *Ness Creek Music Festival* setting, this may potentially lead attendees to behave communally in a socially ideal manner that positively enhances the wellbeing of self, other, and the Earth. On the other hand, another Canadian outdoor music festival setting may yield the opposite result.

Furthermore, it would be advantageous to explore to what degree the natural setting in which a music festival takes place affects the way in which festival-goers treat the environment and one another. This study highlighted the meaningful significance of immersion in the natural elements of the serene Boreal Forest as contributing to an enhanced sense of nurturing and care for self; however, might it also affect the level of compassion for other attendees and for the environment? On another note, how might the type of music featured at a music festival factor into Chartrand and Bargh's (1999) *chameleon effect*? How might the sounds of *Ness Creek Music Festival's* indie, roots, and folk music positively influence social behaviour, as compared to ones spotlighting country, rock, or electronic dance music genres?

Since not all Canadian outdoor music festivals appear to yield synonymous positive experiences of health and wellbeing, future research may be directed toward examining differences in music festival experiences and corresponding perceived outcomes of health and wellbeing. For instance, utilization of a crossover experimental design with selected participants may be employed. Investigators may also conduct research exploring how outcomes of health and wellbeing associated with attending an outdoor music festival might differ from attending at

a music concert in an indoor venue. Such studies may perhaps benefit from precise biofeedback measurements of blood cortisol levels or of neurotransmitter efficiency in the brain's pleasure centre (Benfield et al., 2014). A less costly, timely, and invasive option, however, might involve empirically measuring Seligman's (2011) five dimensions of the *PERMA* paradigm, which comprise positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment. To accomplish this, one might utilize Butler and Kern's (2016) *PERMA*-profiler, a 23-item assessment tool that quantitatively measures wellbeing across all five domains (Seligman, 2018). Psychometric evaluation of this inventory yielded evidence for acceptable internal reliability, cross-time stability, as well as convergent and divergent validity (Butler & Kern, 2016; Seligman, 2018). Butler and Kern's (2016) study revealed that the *PERMA*-profiler was a good overall model fit internationally with a sample size of 30,000 individuals. Use of this instrument would therefore be ideal in a crossover experimental design that calls for maximization of measurement brevity for large sample sizes. Moreover, as it still remains a relatively untapped topic in academic literature, future studies on the psychological and social wellbeing of music festival attendees would benefit from additional research endeavours of a qualitative nature (Ballantyne et al., 2014).

As this study solely explored the positive effects of music festival attendance on physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health and wellbeing, it would be advantageous for future research to examine the potential negative effects of attending this event. In 2018, *BBC News* released results of a survey of 1,188 music festival attendees by YouGov, which revealed that nearly half of female festival attendees (43%) under 40 had been sexually harassed at a music festival. Such harassment included "unwelcome and forceful dancing and verbal sexualized harassment" (BBC News, 2018). Additionally, the May 2018 issue of *Marie Claire* featured an article highlighting the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the music festival setting, imploring design and management teams to implement precautionary safety and control measures to prevent further occurrences (Dieppa, 2018). For instance, at the 2017 *Bråvalla* music festival in Sweden, 4 rapes and 23 sexual assaults were reported, which led organizers to cancel the event the following year. A recent survey conducted by Our Music My Body (OMMB), an organization that serves to raise awareness about sexual misconduct in the music festival setting by promoting a zero-tolerance harassment policy, revealed that 92% of its female respondents ($N = 500$, 75% of whom were female) reported having been harassed in some way (Dieppa, 2018).

Future research would therefore greatly benefit from exploring this unfortunate facet of the music festival experience. Specifically, investigators might explore the potentially traumatic repercussions of being sexually harassed in the music festival setting, as well as the underlying mechanisms sexual assault survivors employ to cope with their experience. It may also be useful to assess the effectiveness of services implemented at music festivals that are designed to minimize sexual misconduct occurrence at these events.

Another facet of the music festival experience that may potentially yield negative effects for the health and wellbeing of its attendees is the exposure to and abuse of alcohol and drugs. Seeking to understand the types of injury and illness presentations at an on-site health care facility at Australian outdoor music festivals, Hutton et al. (2014) reported that alcohol and substance use comprised 15% of all patients ($N = 539$), and that a little more than one presentation across each event ($n = 31$) accessed the facility for mental illness-related issues. It would therefore be beneficial for future research to examine the negative incidences, types, and outcomes of the music festival environment that compromise the mental health of its attendees, as well as to explore how these may be counteracted. Moreover, assessment of existing on-site health care services is warranted so that future operations of such facilities be implemented with optimal effectiveness, minimizing the incidence and prevalence of alcohol- and drug-related risk factors in the music festival setting.

Conversely, there exists the belief that experimental drug use in the music festival setting might be perceived from a therapeutic lens (e.g., Little et al., 2018). For example, *Burning Man*, a community and arts festival that annually occurs in the Black Rock Desert of northwest Nevada, is renowned for its attendees engaging in experimental drug use in the interest of yielding transformative health-positive outcomes. Indeed, in her published article, University of Saskatchewan faculty member in the Department of History Erika Dyck (2015) highlighted a renewed resurgence in the administration of hallucinogenic drugs in clinical settings for alleviating negative symptoms of mental disorders, a phenomenon that was first introduced in the 1950s to treat alcoholism and trauma. With this newfound research renaissance, modern-day scientists are exploring the potentially beneficial impact of drug-assisted therapy. For instance, Danforth, Struble, Yazar-Klosinski, and Grob (2016) found administration of synthetic stimulant 3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA) to be significantly effective in decreasing social anxiety symptomology in adults with autism. Furthermore, positive outcomes of psychedelic

drug lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and fungi psilocybin administration have recently been reported for the treatment of addictions (e.g., Bogenschutz & Johnson, 2016) and for reduction of clinical symptoms for mood and affective disorders (e.g., Vollenweider & Kometer, 2010). Thus, might moderate use of these substances in the music festival context possibly contribute to the enhancement of attendee health and wellbeing?

This study's findings drew attention to two particular activities in the *Ness Creek Music Festival* setting from which participants derived meaningful therapeutic benefits: dancing and drumming. Supporting participant accounts concerning the beneficial impact of dancing in the music festival context, psychologist Peter Lovatt associates the act with maximization of positive emotion (Maddox, 2014). He also attributes dancing to the exploration of personal identity, enhancement of social relationships, and nurturing of *communitas* (Maddox, 2014). The positive benefits of dancing have been examined in empirical creative arts therapy trials. For example, to reduce physiological indicators of stress (e.g., Goulmaris et al., 2014), to ameliorate emotional regulation among adolescents with depression (e.g., Jeong et al., 2005), to aid in promoting resilience and recovery for adolescent survivors of torture in Africa (e.g., Harris, 2007), to decrease schizophrenia symptomology via enhancement of spatial awareness (e.g., Lippi & Petit, 2017), to treat the psychological distress of individuals with Parkinson's disease (e.g., Michels, Dubaz, Hornthal, & Bega, 2018), and even to positively boost self-perceptions of body image among persons who are obese (e.g., Muller-Pinget, Carrard, Ybarra, & Golay, 2012). However, research would benefit from exploring how dancing in the music festival context aids in the optimization of health and wellbeing for its attendees, and how it relates to the therapeutic effects of engagement with the elements of music and nature in this setting.

The curative outcomes of drumming have also been explored in empirical studies. For example, engagement in this activity appears to significantly enhance positive psychology dimensions of wellbeing for mental health service users and their carers (e.g., Ascenso et al., 2018), to elevate self-esteem and social relationship levels among at-risk young persons (e.g., Wood et al., 2013), to increased sense of self-control, openness, togetherness, belonging, sharing, closeness, connectedness, and intimacy among soldiers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD; e.g., Bensimon, Amir, & Wolf, 2008), to ameliorate unhelpful psychological symptomology for Indigenous individuals in a substance abuse treatment intervention program (e.g., Brunk, 2013; Dickerson et al., 2014), to improve social adjustment, emotional adjustment,

and self-image levels of children with a hearing impairment (e.g., Sung, Cheong, & Choi, 2012), and even to the treat pedophilia (Kaser, 1991). Nonetheless, it would seem that the therapeutic impact of drumming in the music festival setting has not been explored yet from a positive psychology perspective, and therefore warrants further scrutiny.

From a historical and sociological perspective, it would be advantageous to compare and contrast restorative outcomes of the music festival experience to Indigenous modes of healing. In particular, the elements of nature, music, dancing, and drumming are notably venerated in this culture for its curative constituents. Furthermore, researchers might employ the bio-psycho-social-spiritual framework in considering the beneficial effects of social inclusion and *communitas* formation, deemed a therapeutic outcome of immersion in and engagement with music and nature in this study. How and why might the music festival culture differ so vastly from the community of an urban setting, the latter of which participants claimed is unbridled with fear and judgment of others? Echoing researchers' call for further investigation of social acceptance, support, and inclusivity in the music festival setting (e.g., Laing & Mair, 2015; Li & Wood, 2016; Pitts, 2005; Wilks, 2011), it would be beneficial to discover the underlying mechanisms related to this utopian discourse of shared humanity characterized by universal freedom, peace, and goodwill.

Another suggestion for furthering research on the music festival experience and its effects on attendee psychological and emotional wellbeing is to examine the potential positive and negative carry-over effects following the event's end (e.g., Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018; O'Grady, 2015; Robertson et al., 2018). How enduring are the maximized outcomes of health and wellbeing achieved by engaging with the therapeutic elements of music and nature at an outdoor music festival? Accounts from all four participants of this study suggest they indeed do, but it would appear that the length and intensity of Seligman's (2011) positive psychology dimensions post-festival have not yet been investigated. Such exploration would enhance understanding of the potentially mentally and emotionally flourishing (or depleting) state of being for attendees as mindful immersion in music and nature's elements, as well as the sense of belonging acquired in the compassionate *communitas*, ceases to be directly experienced.

Finally, scrutiny of individual personality traits of music festival attendees themselves is warranted. In a study by Juslin et al. (2008) that explored the differences in positive emotion outcomes during musical emotion episodes versus non-musical emotion episodes in everyday

life, it was found that *pleasure-enjoyment* was positively correlated with *neuroticism*, and that the prevalence of positive emotions was positively correlated with *extraversion*. As the personality dimensions of an individual may contribute to the formation of *communitas* in the music festival setting, personality correlates of musical emotions are worth investigating further. One may quantitatively accumulate this data by administering John, Donahue, and Kentle's (1991) NEO-Big Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI), which empirically measures the five dimensions of personality: (1) Extraversion, Energy, Enthusiasm, (2) Agreeableness, Altruism, Affection, (3) Conscientiousness, Control, Constraint, (4) Neuroticism, Negative Affectivity, Nervousness, and (5) Openness to Experience, Originality, Open-mindedness. It is a brief inventory (44 items) designed to efficiently and flexibly assess the five personality domains, and avoid subject boredom and fatigue effects (John & Srivastava, 1999). The NEO-FFI is deemed a valid instrument whose scale and subscales possess satisfactory scale score reliability: Extraversion: $\alpha = .87$; Agreeableness: $\alpha = .75$; Conscientiousness: $\alpha = .80$; Neuroticism: $\alpha = .81$; Openness to Experience: $\alpha = .75$ (John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008). Furthermore, since the present study focused on females in the emerging adult age cohort, future research might benefit from comparative studies of gender and of age in the perceived optimization of health and wellbeing in the music festival setting. Insightful differences might be identified about how these different groups experience, interpret, and draw meaning from the therapeutic elements of this event.

Research Implications for Practice

As this study served to further develop a relatively novel area of research, notable findings and their implications are outlined for therapeutic application. This section commences with an exploration of how mental health professionals and educators might benefit from employing sensorial and mindfulness-based techniques in their practice, and how these relate to restorative outcomes yielded in the therapeutic modalities involving music and nature. Next, suggested strategies that music festival management and design teams may choose to implement to maximize the health and wellbeing of attendees at outdoor music festivals are discussed.

For mental health professionals and educators. Immersing oneself in music and nature at *Ness Creek Music Festival*, this study's participants unanimously reported a therapeutically restored equilibration of their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing. Whether witnessing breathtaking natural wonders moving in synergy, hearing the harmonious sounds of

musical performances, smelling the flora dispersed throughout Saskatchewan's Boreal Forest, or feeling the thunderous yet soothing rhythmic vibrations emitted from the Drum and Dance Circle, it is by being mindfully aware of one's sensorial interaction with the elements of music and nature that one achieves optimal health and wellbeing in the music festival setting. In doing so, one is removed from their everyday life stressors, pressures, and expectations, and as a result, physical, mental, and emotional distress may be significantly mitigated. This phenomenon is particularly exemplified in mindfulness-based interventions, which encompass the practice of conscientiously tending to present-moment manifestations via sensorial engagement (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Keng et al., 2011; Khoury et al., 2015). Jon Kabat-Zinn (2003), Professor Emeritus of Medicine and founder of the mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) therapeutic modality, defines mindfulness as "the awareness that emerges through paying attention on purpose, in the present moment, and non-judgmentally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment. [It further comprises an] affectionate, compassionate quality within the attending, a sense of openhearted, friendly presence and interest" (p. 145).

In their research article, Filep et al. (2015) describe how mental health professionals and educators would benefit from implementing Buddhist modes of healing within positive psychology-informed practices. Modern-day mindfulness-based modalities of healing are thought to have originated from 2,550-year-old Buddhist teachings related to the nature of human suffering and liberation from its affliction (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Keng et al., 2011; Khoury et al., 2015; Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Compassionately tending to, understanding, and accepting the inexorable suffering of humankind on Earth is believed to alleviate pain by releasing control, so that one can be mentally, emotionally, and spiritually unshackled (Kabat-Zinn, 2003). Present-day mindfulness embodies a similar purpose, in that it serves to maintain and enhance wellbeing via nurturing of "consciousness that is characterized by clarity and vividness of current experience functioning and thus stands in contrast to the mindless, less "awake" states of habitual or automatic functioning that may be chronic for many individuals" (p. 823). This finding is particularly salient for female emerging adults as they attempt to navigate through increasing levels of stressors, pressures, and expectations on a daily basis (Lamont, 2011; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Hinds, 2011; Strömbäck et al., 2015).

Mindful engagement with therapeutic present-moment sensory stimuli has been shown to minimize unhealthy thought and behavioural patterns that compromise psychological wellbeing

(Brown & Ryan, 2003; Keng et al., 2011; Khoury et al., 2015; Robins et al., 2012). It has also led to an increase in self-compassion and behavioural-emotional self-regulation (Brown & Ryan, 2003; Keng et al., 2011; Khoury et al., 2015; Robins et al., 2012). In a study with emerging adult college students, it would appear that the practice of mindfulness has resulted in significant decreases in stress and anxiety symptomology (Bamber & Schneider, 2016). Other studies with adult populations have also reported that mindfulness has restorative properties for health and wellbeing because of (a) reducing general distress and promoting optimal psychological wellbeing (e.g., Bohlmeijer, Prenger, Taal, & Cuijpers, 2010; Brown & Ryan, 2003; Chiesa & Serretti, 2009; Daube & Jakobsche, 2015; Eberth & Sedlmeier, 2012; Keng et al., 2011; Khoury et al., 2015; Paulson et al., 2013; Sharma & Rush, 2014; Virgili, 2015), (b) decreasing depression symptomology (e.g., Bohlmeijer et al., 2010; Khoury et al., 2015), and (c) alleviating thought-driven symptoms of anxiety (e.g., Arch et al., 2013; Bohlmeijer et al., 2010; Khoury et al., 2015; Sharma & Rush, 2014; Vøllestad et al., 2011).

Based on the present study's findings, it seems that mindful presence is an integral factor in yielding optimal therapeutic benefits when engaging with nature and music. As a mental health professional and/or educator, one may choose to incorporate components of nature therapy into their practice, a modality deemed underutilized in counselling modes of psychological healing (Nisbet et al., 2011; Passmore & Howell, 2014; Wilson et al., 2009). Nature therapy comprises integrating a natural setting within the therapeutic alliance; namely, the natural locale is personified as a third-party contributor to the dialogue in a session (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Logan & Selhub, 2012). Embodying Thomson's (1914) *vis medicatrix naturae* phenomenon, it would seem that counselling in natural settings may prompt more efficient and effective positive therapeutic change than counselling taking place in a typical office setting (Logan & Selhub, 2012). According to Berger and McLeod (2006), "a conscious physical journey in nature can trigger parallel psychological and spiritual quests that can open a channel for mind-body work. [...] Each part of the nature [...] has a specific resonance on the client, inviting the client into an inner process" (p. 86). As reported in the music festival setting of the present study, participants experienced nature as fostering a non-judgmental, accepting, and compassionate environment in which they drew profound meaning and insight. Participants reconnected with their raw self and instilled positive change that nurtured their physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual wellbeing (Berger & McLeod, 2006; Berman et al., 2012; Nisbet et al.,

2011; Passmore & Howell, 2014; Wilson et al., 2009). Moreover, it can be incorporated into any other psychotherapeutic modalities and employed with any population seeking therapy (Berger & McLeod, 2006). Thus, interaction with nature in clinical therapeutic treatments appears to be an effective modality to enhance client health and wellbeing.

It is important to note that nature therapy's inception drew upon elements from expressive arts therapeutic modalities such as music therapy (Berger & McLeod, 2006). In particular, both nature therapy and music therapy involves sensorial engagement with its stimulatory properties (e.g., flora and fauna, meteorological emergences, and universal boundlessness in the former; melody and harmony, rhythm, and vibration in the latter). Recent literature has individually documented either music engagement therapeutic outcomes (e.g., Ascenso et al., 2018; Lippman & Greenwood, 2012; Schäfer et al., 2014; Wood et al., 2013) or those yielded from nature engagement (e.g., Berman et al., 2012; Beyer et al., 2014; Bratman et al., 2015a; Bratman et al., 2015b; Cervinka et al., 2011). However, results of this study suggest that mindful practice with interconnected elements of both music and nature yield synonymous positive benefits that greatly enhance health and wellbeing. According to Kabat-Zinn (2003), it would seem that the mindful process of "cultivating and refining our innate capacity for a deep, penetrative seeing/sensing of the interconnectedness of apparently separate aspects of experience" yields maximal health and wellbeing (p. 149). Based on this study's findings, concurrent implementation of aspects from both music therapy and nature therapy modalities are warranted in counselling practice.

For music festival management and design teams. It would appear that music festival design and management teams play a role in the maximization of attendee health and wellbeing at their organized events (e.g., Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2018). Specifically, the activities they arrange, the programs they implement, and the valued mores they propagate may significantly contribute to optimal experiences of wellness (Filep et al., 2015; Little et al., 2018; Robertson et al., 2018).

Regarding *Ness Creek Music Festival's* Saskatchewan Boreal Forest setting, "the land is our heartbeat, its rhythm and flow guiding our behaviour, orientation, and direction. We strive to be stewards of the earth, ever mindful of the Festival's impact upon it, and to be a green and sustainable community" (Ness Creek Music Festival, 2019). All participants in this study emphasized their gratitude for *Ness Creek Music Festival's* management team honouring and

prioritizing utmost care for the natural surroundings in which the event takes place. As noted in studies by Alonso-Vazquez et al. (2019) and Mair and Laing (2013), it would seem that the promotion of environmentally-responsible attitudes and behaviours increased participants' sense of nature connectedness, which then prompted positive outcomes of health and wellbeing. In order to best facilitate the endorsement of pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours and other potential desired codes of conduct, Alonso-Vazquez et al. (2019) proposed that music festival management and design teams would do well to (a) outline core values and standards of behaviour expected to be respected and followed at the music festival prior to attendance, and explain how attendees' comportment at the event might positively impact other attendees and the natural locale; (b) implement continually-reinforced prompts on-site that emphasize optimal codes of conduct toward self, others, and the environment, as well as provide easy access to waste management bins; and (c) share positive outcomes of the music festival upon its completion. It would seem that the *Ness Creek Music Festival* design and management team has implemented such strategies, all of which appeared to have enhanced positive experiential health and wellbeing for the participants of this study. To name just a few, *Ness Creek Music Festival*

- (a) promotes year-round environmentally-responsible and health-positive messages on their website and social media sources;
- (b) endorses pro-environmental attitudes and behaviours at the event by (i) running a recycling and composting site and (ii) posting positive messages related to nature connectedness;
- (c) encourages health-enhancing outcomes through organization of abundant therapeutic workshops focusing on attendee health and wellbeing (e.g., Meditation in the Forest; Teaching the World to Sing in Perfect Harmony; Kundalini Yoga; Together: Creating Joyful Movement; Drum Workshop; Yin Yoga & Life Drawing; Humans of Ness Creek; Navigating Sex and Relationships; Party Drug Awareness; Permaculture Workshop in the Forest Garden; First Nations Pow Wow; Men's Talking Circle; Anti-Racism Workshop);
- (d) presents a skit on consent of intimate relations several times a day in between musical performances at the Main Stage;
- (e) implemented the SafeNess service, a therapeutic space where attendees can go to alleviate mental and emotional distress; and

(f) reported a detailed waste audit of the event on their website attendees can access following the end of the event.

According to the 2018 audit, landfill waste had considerably decreased, with additional drops in compostables, recyclable cans and bottles, as well as other recyclables comprising paper, plastics, and non-beverage glasses (Ness Creek Music Festival, 2019). Thus, it would seem that *Ness Creek Music Festival's* management and design model is ideal in optimizing the health and wellbeing of its attendees, as well as in implementing sustainable strategies to maximize the health and wellbeing of the Boreal Forest setting.

Based on participant accounts, it would appear that volunteering opportunities in the music festival setting also enhance attendee health and wellbeing. Three of the four participants in this study were volunteers (i.e., two at the SafeNess tent, the other in the First Aid tent). For these young women, volunteering appeared to foster the maximization of health and wellbeing over the course of the music festival. Namely, it enhanced all five *PERMA* dimensions of positive emotion, engagement, positive relationships, meaning, and accomplishment, as well as nurtured psychological needs of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, hence prompting elevated levels of self-assuredness, altruism, and purpose (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Seligman, 2010; Seligman, 2011). Moreover, implementation of safe spaces for potential physical injuries or incidents of mental and emotional distress are integral in the optimization of attendee health and wellbeing (Bachman et al., 2017; Robertson et al., 2018). Thus, application of preventative and risk management services also appears to significantly boost positive health and wellbeing for all attendees in a music festival setting.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the lived experience and meaning of attending a Canadian outdoor music festival for the health and wellbeing of female emerging adult attendees. Findings validated results from Packer and Ballantyne's (2011) iconic study that examined the psychological wellbeing of its attendees. As music was one of the main therapeutic foci of this study, this research presents findings that support *the music experience* theme as a salient factor in the optimization of attendee health and wellbeing (Ballantyne et al., 2014; Harrison, 214; Packer & Ballantyne, 2011).

As an extension of Packer and Ballantyne's (2011) *separation experience* theme, this study was the first of its kind to intimately explore the therapeutic effects of nature immersion

for the health and wellbeing of its attendees. As observed in results encompassing the therapeutic benefits yielded from music immersion, it would appear that engagement with the elements of nature in the outdoor music festival setting also fosters enhancement of Seligman's (2011) five pillars of the positive psychological theoretical framework: (a) positive emotion, (b) engagement, (c) positive relationships, (d) meaning, and (e) accomplishment (i.e., *PERMA*). A particularly salient finding comprises the remedial outcomes resulting from simultaneous immersion in the elements of music and nature at a musical festival. Based on participant accounts, it is suggested that concurrent mindful engagement with the intertwined therapeutic stimuli of music and nature in the music festival setting facilitates a uniquely transformational experience that nurtures the optimization of female emerging adult attendee health and wellbeing.

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Appendix A

Notice of Approval from *Ness Creek Music Festival* Office Manager for Proposed Participant

Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures

Ness Creek Music Festival <admin@nesscreek.com>

Wed 6/6/2018 9:10 AM

To:

Soulodre, Natalie;

You replied on 6/11/2018 1:04 PM.

Hi Natalie,

Thank you for getting in touch with us about your project. It sounds like you are doing some excellent research and we would be happy to have you conduct your interviews at our festival.

Is there anything that you need from us to help facilitate your work?

You may be interested in one of our projects happening at the festival this year called "The Humans of Ness Creek". We will be conducting some interviews of our own, collecting stories from people about their favourite memories about the Ness Creek Festival. This is happening at our Sharing Circle on Friday at 10:00AM and at the Drum & Dance Circle on Saturday at 7:00PM. If you do go and check out this project in action, be sure to introduce yourself to Paige Unruh...she is our Marketing and Communications Coordinator and one of the people managing that particular project.

There is also another festival at the Ness Creek site this year from August 3rd to August 5th called Electric Sky, featuring electronic music (we're really excited about this!). Their URL is <https://www.electricsky.ca> if you would like to learn more about what's happening with that festival.

We would love to read the results of your study when you are finished!

Thanks again for getting in touch.

Carrie Gates
Office Manager

Ness Creek Cultural and Recreational Society
#202 804 Dufferin Avenue
Saskatoon, SK
S7H 2B8
1-306-652-6377

www.nesscreekmusicfestival.com

Open 10pm - 6pm Monday to Friday.

Appendix B

Recruitment Handbill

Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education University of Saskatchewan



Are you a female between 18 and 29 years of age?

**Interested in sharing about your
experience at this music festival?**

We are looking for female emerging adult volunteers to take part in a study about the perceived benefits of music and nature on their health and wellbeing.

As a participant in this study, you would be asked to spend approximately one hour of your time discussing your experience at this music festival.

In appreciation for your time, you will receive a **\$15 iTunes gift card**.

For more information about this study, or to volunteer for this study, please find **Natalie at Nat's Nook** under the bright green umbrella with the musical neon pink poster between the hours of 10 a.m. and 2 p.m. ☺

Thank you in advance for your time and consideration!

Researcher: Natalie Souloire, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, +1.306.260.3625, nrs758@mail.usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jennifer Nicol, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, +1.306.966.5261, jennifer.nicol@usask.ca

**This study has been reviewed by, and received approval
through, the Research Ethics Office, University of Saskatchewan.**



Appendix C

Participant Consent Form



Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive, Room 3021
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1, Canada
tel. +1.306.966.7720

Participant Consent Form

Project Title: In Natural Harmony: Emerging Adult Women's Experience of Music and Nature in a Music Festival Setting

Researcher: Natalie Soulodre, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, nrs758@mail.usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jennifer Nicol, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, +1.306.966.5261, jennifer.nicol@usask.ca

Purpose and Objectives of the Research:

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of female emerging adult attendees of a Canadian outdoor music festival. Specifically, this study seeks (1) to examine the perceived beneficial effects of music and nature on their health and wellbeing, as well as (2) to explore how they interpret and create personal meaning from attending such an event.

Procedures:

The researcher intends to recruit three to five participants near the music festival's end. Each interested participant will set up an arranged time and place of her choosing to meet with the researcher on the music festival grounds. All interviews are expected to last anywhere between 45 and 75 minutes. Eight pre-selected questions of an open-ended nature will be asked to the participant to gain information about her experiences in a music festival setting. Participant interviews will be recorded digitally and transcribed. Should you have any questions regarding the procedures and goals of the study or your role, please feel free to ask the researcher.

Potential Risks:

There are no known immediate or anticipated risks to you by participating in this study. Nevertheless, should participation in this study make you feel uncomfortable, distressed, or upset in any way, minimization of such risks would be addressed by the following:

(1) The researcher is trained in counselling techniques, and has 8 months of individual counselling experience in the Saskatoon community. She will therefore be able to provide support to participants who indicate emotional distress.

(2) In the event that a participant indicates suicidal ideation during the interview, the researcher is certified in ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) to help support the participant.

(3) Participants will be provided with a Debriefing Form containing information for provincially-offered community counselling services should they require them.

- (Central Saskatchewan) West Central Crisis and Family Support Centre / tel. 306.463.6655
- (North Saskatchewan) Northeast Crisis Line / tel. 1.800.611.6349
- (North Saskatchewan) Piwapan Women's Centre - Crisis Line / tel. 306.425.4090
- (South West Saskatchewan) Southwest Crisis Services / tel. 1.800.567.3334
- Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit / tel. 306.764.1011
- Regina Mobile Crisis Services – Crisis Line / tel. 306.757.0127
- Regina Mobile Crisis Services – Crisis Suicide Line / tel. 306.525.5333
- (Rural Saskatchewan) Saskatchewan Farm Stress Line / tel. 1.800.667.4442
- Saskatoon Mobile Crisis / tel. 306.933.6200
- (Canada) Crisis Services Canada – Suicide Prevention and Support / tel. 1.866.456.4566
- (Canada) First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line / tel. 1.855.242.3310

(4) Prior to beginning the interview, participants will be informed that participation in this study is strictly of a voluntary nature, and that they can thus withdraw from the study at any point.

Potential Benefits:

Benefits of this research include furthering knowledge on the therapeutic effects yielded when immersing oneself in a musical and nature-bound experience. This study will inform (1) mental health professionals and educators on how they may apply such findings in their therapeutic role; (2) emerging adults on the influence of healing factors at an outdoor music festival for optimizing their health and wellbeing, some of which they may choose to intentionally employ in their everyday lives; and (3) outdoor music festival design and management teams on how best to optimize attendees' wellbeing at these events.

Compensation:

Each participant will receive a \$15 iTunes gift card in compensation for approximately one hour of their time.

Confidentiality:

- Given the detailed nature of participant responses, anonymity is impossible. Nonetheless, confidentiality of responses will be ensured for the participants involved in this study. In order to best maximize participant anonymity and confidentiality, all data will be de-identified. Participants will grant themselves a pseudonym during the data collection stage of the study. Solely the pseudonym will be used in the report of this study's results. As such, measures of participant anonymity and confidentiality will be maximized during the data collection and data analysis procedures of this project.
- The data from this research project will be used as the basis for a thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the Degree of Master of Education in the Department of Educational Psychology and Special Education at the University of Saskatchewan. The data may also be published in an academic journal and/or presented at a professional conference. However, the identity of participants will be kept confidential. Although the researcher will report direct quotations from the interview, participants will be denoted solely by their selected pseudonym. All identifying information will be omitted from the report.

Storage of Data:

All audiotapes, signed consent forms, and transcripts will be available only to the researcher and faculty supervisor. The signed Consent Forms will be stored separately from the audiotapes and transcripts, so that it will not be possible to associate a name with any given set of responses. These items will be safeguarded and securely stored in the office of the faculty supervisor, in the Department of Educational

Psychology and Special Education, for a duration of five years. When the data is no longer required, it will then be appropriately destroyed.

Right to Withdraw:

- Your participation is voluntary and you can answer only those questions with which you are comfortable. You may withdraw from the research project for any reason, at any time without explanation or penalty of any sort.
- Should you choose to withdraw, your data will be deleted from the research project and destroyed beyond recovery.
- Your right to withdraw data from the study will apply until August 24, 2018, when transcription of the data is complete. After this, it is possible that some form of research dissemination will have already occurred and it may not be possible to withdraw your de-identified data.

Follow up:

Should you be interested in obtaining results of this study, please feel free to contact the researcher, Natalie Soulodre, by emailing her at nrs758@mail.usask.ca after January 4, 2019. The researcher would be more than happy to provide you with the summarized results of the study.

Questions or Concerns:

- Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this study, please contact the researcher using the information provided at the beginning of the Consent Form.
- This research project has been reviewed and approved on ethical grounds by the University of Saskatchewan Behavioural Research Ethics Board. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to that committee through the Research Ethics Office toll free at 1.888.966.2975 or at ethics.office@usask.ca.

Consent to Participate:

My signature below indicates that I have read and understand the description provided. I have had an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. I consent to participate in the research project. A copy of this Consent Form has been given to me for my records.

_____	_____	_____
<i>Name of Participant</i>	<i>Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

_____	_____
<i>Researcher's Signature</i>	<i>Date</i>

A copy of this consent will be left with you, and a copy will be taken by the researcher.

Appendix D

Participant Background Information Form

Chosen Pseudonym: _____

Age: _____

Ethnicity: _____

How many Canadian outdoor music festivals have you attended prior to this one in the past 2 years?

____ **5 or more.**

____ **4**

____ **3**

____ **2**

____ **1**

____ **NONE, this is my first festival.**

Do you feel that this Canadian outdoor music experience has benefitted your health and wellbeing in some way?

____ **YES, this experience has benefitted my health and wellbeing in some way.**

____ **NO, this experience has not benefitted my health nor wellbeing in any way.**

Appendix E

Interview Guide

❖ Introduction to the Research

- The purpose of this conversation is to learn about your experience at this music festival in terms of health and wellbeing, and in particular, how you experience music and nature at this Canadian outdoor music festival.
- There are no wrong answers to the questions that I ask, and you can talk freely as we consider the topic and discover new insights and understanding together.
- If you have any questions for me during the interview, please do not hesitate to ask.
- Again, please talk freely about your experience of attending this music festival.

❖ Interview Questions

- ✚ Let's start by talking about how music festivals are part of your life, as well as how they relate to your health and wellness.
 - *Like a story with a beginning – how you first got involved – and then ended up in this moment here?*
- ✚ Thinking about your time here at this outdoor music festival...
 - Tell me about a positive experience with music that stands out to you and that has benefitted your health and wellbeing in some way.
 - Tell me about an experience with nature that stands out to you and that has benefitted your health and wellbeing in some way.
 - *How did that make you feel emotionally?*
 - *How did that feel in your body? Any visceral reaction to the experience?*
 - *Experiences with time, space, others?*
- ✚ How do you feel this Canadian outdoor music festival experience has benefitted you?
- ✚ What difference has being part of the Canadian outdoor music festival scene made for you?
 - *Has it changed how you understand yourself?*
 - *Has it changed how you understand others?*
 - *Has it changed how you understand the world?*
- ✚ What do you appreciate about this particular music festival?
- ✚ What do you feel you have personally gained from attending this music festival?
- ✚ Is there anything else you would like to share about your experience at Canadian outdoor music festivals?

❖ Example Probing Questions

- Due to the semi-structured nature of the above questions, additional probing questions may be used to clarify participant responses.
 - *How so?*
 - *Could you please tell me a little bit more about that?*
 - *And what was that like for you?*

❖ Debrief to the Research

- Is there anything you have shared during this interview that you wish for me to remove from the record?
- Is there anything else regarding your experience of music and nature at this music festival that you wish you had shared with me?

Appendix F

Participant Debriefing Form



Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education
University of Saskatchewan
28 Campus Drive, Room 3021
Saskatoon, SK S7N 0X1, Canada
tel. +1.306.966.7720

Debriefing Form

Project Title: In Natural Harmony: Emerging Adult Women's Experience of Music and Nature in a Music Festival Setting

Researcher: Natalie Soulodre, Graduate Student, Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, nrs758@mail.usask.ca

Supervisor: Dr. Jennifer Nicol, Professor, Department of Educational Psychology & Special Education, University of Saskatchewan, +1.306.966.5261, jennifer.nicol@usask.ca

We greatly appreciate you for your participation in this study!

The purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of female emerging adult attendees of a Canadian outdoor music festival. Specifically, this study seeks (1) to examine the perceived beneficial effects of music and nature on their health and wellbeing, as well as (2) to explore how they interpret and create personal meaning from attending such an event. It is our hope that the results of this study might inform (1) mental health professionals and educators on how they may apply such findings in their therapeutic role; (2) you (and other female emerging adults) on how music and nature might be used intentionally in everyday life to optimize wellbeing; and (3) outdoor music festival design and management teams on how best to optimize attendees' wellbeing at these events.

We have taken care to conduct this study in the most ethical manner possible. Should you have any complaints, concerns, or questions about this research, please feel free to contact either researcher listed above. You are also encouraged to contact the researchers for a copy of the full report which is expected to be available by January 4, 2019. Any questions regarding your rights as a participant may be addressed to the Behavioural Research Ethics Board through the Research Ethics Office at ethics.office@usask.ca, or toll free at 1.888.966.2975.

If any part of your participation in this study has made you feel uncomfortable, distressed, or upset, please consider accessing some of the resources listed below:

❖ Saskatchewan

- (Central Saskatchewan) West Central Crisis and Family Support Centre / tel. 306.463.6655
- (North Saskatchewan) Northeast Crisis Line / tel. 1.800.611.6349
- (North Saskatchewan) Piwapan Women's Centre - Crisis Line / tel.306.425.4090
- (South West Saskatchewan) Southwest Crisis Services / tel. 1.800.567.3334
- Prince Albert Mobile Crisis Unit / tel. 306.764.1011
- Regina Mobile Crisis Services – Crisis Line / tel. 306.757.0127
- Regina Mobile Crisis Services – Crisis Suicide Line / tel. 306.525.5333
- (Rural Saskatchewan) Saskatchewan Farm Stress Line / tel. 1.800.667.4442
- Saskatoon Mobile Crisis / tel. 306.933.6200
- (Canada) Crisis Services Canada – Suicide Prevention and Support / tel. 1.866.456.4566
- (Canada) First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line / tel. 1.855.242.3310

Finally, thank you again for helping us with this research.